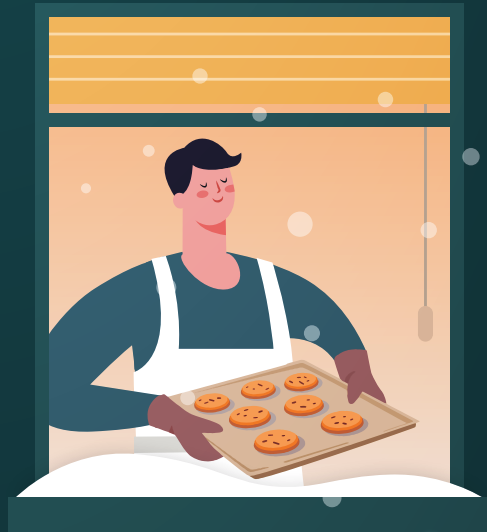


house talk

Winter 2023 • for council tenants and leaseholders • keeping you informed



You can still win a FREE iPad

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**Christmas
events**

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**Cool things for teens
to do this winter**

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**How we spend
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**Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL**

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Resident Engagement Team

Shout about how great your neighbour is, ask a question, get involved with a community group, or give us an idea for an article - the list is endless. Plus, it's really easy for you to get in touch with us.

How to contact us

Send it to **The Resident Engagement Centre, 33 Sharps Rd, Havant, Hants, PO9 5QJ**

Email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call **023 9283 4835**.

Follow us

Be the neighbour in the know by heading to our Facebook page at facebook.com/lovehousetalk

Competitions

Competitions in House Talk are open only to residents who live in a Portsmouth City Council property. They are not open to employees of PCC. One entry per household.

Recycle

House Talk is printed on 100% recycled paper using vegetable inks. Please recycle this magazine when you have finished with it.

Leaseholder services

Paulsgrove & Wecock Farm.....	9283 4561
Buckland, Landport & Portsea	9283 4845
City South	9284 1486
Leigh Park	9284 1741

Area offices

Buckland.....	9260 6500
Somerstown.....	9260 6300
Landport.....	9260 6400
Leigh Park	9230 6900
Paulsgrove	9260 6030
Portsea	9260 6200
Wecock Farm	9260 6100
Out of hours	9282 4244

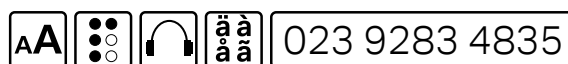
Know anyone who needs this in a different language?

Chcesz mieć ten magazyn w innym języku?

想要这本杂志的不同语言版本吗?

একটিভিন্ন ভাষায় এই পত্রিকা চান?

Call/Dzwonić/称呼/कल:



House Talk is produced by Portsmouth City Council.
www.portsmouth.gov.uk



Hello!

Hi, I'm Adam and I'm the new Assistant Director of Buildings for the council, having lived and worked in Portsmouth for 22 years - 15 of those at the council.

I look after the teams who deliver all the repairs, maintenance and construction of our council-owned buildings and homes.

In my new role I want to make sure we carry on giving you high quality homes that meet your needs. We'll do this by focusing on modernising and improving the energy efficiency of homes, and above all, making sure they're safe.

I look forward to meeting you in the future and talking about the challenges we face, and the improvements we'll make together.

Looking for part-time work during term time?

You could join our school support teams (aka local heroes), and there's only two things you need:

- You enjoy working with children
- You communicate well

If that's you, then apply now! You'll get full training, a competitive salary and staff benefits.

Or you could become a school crossing patroller (literal angels in our community).

Again, just two things:

- Enjoy chatting to people
- Got a keen eye for spotting hazards on the road

You'll get all the iconic uniform and safety equipment provided.

Finally, you could be relief passenger assistant. Local heroes who help pupils with special education needs to and from school. It's a flexible role, where you'll provide cover for our permanent staff.



To apply now, visit www.portsmouth.gov.uk and select 'Find a job at the council'



What is

private fostering?

When a child lives with someone who isn't a close relative for more than 28 days, it's known as private fostering, and we legally need to be told to ensure their welfare.

There's lots of reasons why this could happen - from family breakdowns, parents working away, or maybe a child from outside the UK living with friends or relatives.

To speak to us about a private fostering arrangement call **023 9268 8793** or email privatefostering@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Visit www.privatefostering.org.uk.





Have we met before?

Hi, we're your resident engagement team. We're your go-to people for so many tenant-related things. Here's some things you might want from time-to-time, and how we can help:

I want to be listened to

- **Pop along to your Resident Consortiums** (a fancy name for tenant meetings).
You turn up, hear from different people who work in housing, and ask them your questions. Don't miss out (and use the voucher below):

- Thursday 4 January, 10am–12pm in room 4
- Thursday 1 February, 6–8pm in room 3
- Thursday 7 March, 10am–12pm in room 4

They all take place at Somerstown Hub, PO5 4JJ.

FREE DRINK

Show this voucher to one of the resident engagement team, and use it to receive a free hot drink!



Signed:

- **Take your Tenant Satisfaction Survey!**
It's super easy, and there's prizes to be won. Find out more on page 15.
- **Be part of a Focus Group.**
They're one-off meetings where we'll talk with a few of you about a new idea or topic.

I want to learn something new

- **Let us take you on an Estate Walkabout.**
We'll show you how we manage your estate, and ask for your ideas for how we can improve.
- **Let us take you to South Coast Training.**
It'll give tenants the skills to get involved and make a difference in our housing service.

I want to have fun

- **Come to our Resident Participation Centre in West Leigh!**
We run loads of free groups and classes for you to join. Head to page 8 to find out more.
- **Come to a Community Event!**
Follow us on Facebook at **Portsmouth City Council** and **PCCresidentsmatter** to look out for new events.

I want help getting into work

- **We can offer you Employment Support.**
Things like DBS checks, qualifications and training to help you into work.

Curious about any of the above? Email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call 023 9283 4835.



Lately as a team,
we've...

Visited 41 blocks

Been working on 43
projects with you

Helped 84 of you
with employment

Taken 8 of you on estate walkabouts

Supported lots of coffee
mornings and afternoons

Listened to 943 of you
on lots of housing topics

Renovated one of our green spaces
with the garden club

Attended 38 community events
with over 5,000 of you

Want to make a complaint, compliment or suggestion?

For complaints, either:

👤 Contact your housing office (info on page 2)

✉ cc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

🌐 www.portsmouth.gov.uk/complaints

For compliments or suggestions, either

✉ housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

☎ 023 9283 4835

Whilst we're here, did you know...

- We've gotten **330** complaints in the last year
- We solved **78%** of them within 12–17 days
- You also complimented our service **29** times and made **15** suggestions (thank you!)

We never ignore your complaints, and we always want to hear your ideas. To see a full breakdown of how we sorted your complaints in the last year, head to www.portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk

Who's in the photo?

From left to right: **Kelly** and **Janine** (Portsea), **Gemma** (Paulsgrove), **Janine** (Wecock), **Rachel** (Somerstown), **Becky** (Leigh Park), **Trish** (Landport), **Heidi** (team leader) and **Castiel** (engagement assistant).

Contact your local housing office (p2) or use the details at the bottom of page 4 to get in touch with one of us!

Have you received a letter from us?

It will have been us asking you to contact the repairs support team to take a survey they're running. If you haven't gotten the letter yet, keep an eye out for it.

The survey takes around an hour but it's super important in helping the team service your homes better. Thanks in advance!

Follow us on Facebook at 'PCCresidentsmatter'

What the team have been up to



The Mayor of Havant visited our fabulous 'All Things Stitch' club to see the 1000 poppies they've crocheted for Park Community School!



Out and about helping to run 'Play events' for families in Leigh Park and Wecock Farm. It was a summer of entertainment, arts and crafts, sports and great food.



Our 'Summer Fun Day' at the Resident Participation Centre in Leigh Park was loads of fun, if we do say so ourselves...



"This is the best place in West Leigh for a cuppa and chat"

Let's get out and about

Love Southsea Market

📅 23 November and every weekend in December
📍 Palmerston Road

Community Craft Market

📅 25 November, 10am–3pm
📍 Community Kettle, PO6 3AJ

A variety of local crafts for sale including jewellery, soft furnishing, decorative items, created by local crafters and artists.

Festival of Christmas

📅 9 December, 10am–5pm and
10 December, 10am–4pm
📍 Port Solent

Explore more than 100 market stalls whilst enjoying live music from local bands and choirs, street entertainment and delicious food and drink. It's the perfect festive day out to get you in the Christmas spirit.

Woodland Health and Wellbeing Walks

📅 29 November, 10am–12pm and
13 December, 10am–12pm
📍 Queen Elizabeth Country Park

These are free events, but you'll need to book a space.

For more info visit portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk or call the event organisers on **023 9259 5040**.

Baby Talk Workshop

📅 12 December, 10.30am–12pm
📍 Tesco Extra, Havant

Explore the importance of communicating with your baby in this fun (and free) session!



Messy Church

📅 13 December, 4pm–6pm
📍 Empower Centre Portsmouth, Kingston Road, PO2 7DX

Free crafts, creative worship, food and lots of fun for children, accompanied by parents/carers.

Let's get social in Portsmouth



SPORTY

Hilsea Running Club

📅 Every Tuesday, 6.30am
📍 Hilsea Lido

No need to book, just turn up.



BRAINY

Chess club

📅 Every Thursday, 7pm–10pm
📍 Cosham Community Centre

Email davecordner20@gmail.com

Scrabble Club

📅 Every Monday, 10am–12pm
📍 Alderman Lacey library

Call **023 9282 3991** or email
alderman.library@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

GARDENING

Ethnic Gardening Project

📅 Every Monday, 12.30pm–2.30pm
📍 Landport Community Garden

Call **023 9284 1762**.

CRAFTY

Sketchy Southsea

📅 First Thursday of the month
📍 Croxton's Kitchen & Tap House

No need to book, just turn up.

Craft Club

📅 Every Monday, 2pm–4pm
📍 Alderman Lacey library

Call **023 9282 3991** or email
alderman.library@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

CHATTY

Men's Social Group

📅 Every Wednesday, 11am–12.30pm
📍 Paulsgrove Library

Call **023 9254 1762** or email
IWT@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Community Cuppa

📅 Every Tuesday, 1.30pm–3.30pm
📍 Paulsgrove Community Centre

Call **07984 150491** or email
gemma.holden@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Cross Cultural Women's Group

📅 Every Wednesday, 12pm–2.30pm
📍 Somerstown Hub

Term-time only.

Call **023 9284 1762** or email
IWT@portsmouthcc.gov.uk



FOR LITTLE ONES

Tots in Tow

📅 Every Tuesday, 10am–11.30am
📍 St Luke's Southsea

Visit stlukessouthsea.church

Story Time (various libraries)

📅 Term time only except Southsea that runs sessions every week

Monday: Central, 2pm

Tuesday: North End, 2pm

Wednesday: Paulsgrove, 2pm

Thursday: Alderman Lacey, 10am

Thursday: Cosham, 2pm

Friday: Beddow, 10am

**Start your
own group!**

Want to start your own group but not sure how? Let us help you.

We can help with equipment, location and promotion! The way we see it, the more groups we have in the community the better. So get in touch if you're interested! Call **07392 861452** or email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Let's Get Social in West Leigh

Specifically, at our Resident Participation Centre (PO9 1HD). If you want to join in the fun, all you have to do is get in touch and we'll sort the rest!

Monthly One Pot Cooking

📅 3 January, 11.30am–1pm and
7 February, 11.30am–1pm

A friendly and welcoming group session where you'll learn to cook delicious one-pot meals.

Community Cuppa

📅 Every second and fourth Wednesday
of the month

A cup of tea and a friendly catch up with your community - what more could you want?

All things stitch

📅 Every Tuesday, 10am–1pm

Stitching, crocheting and fun chats for all ages and abilities.

Thursday Crafts

📅 Every Thursday 10am–12pm

A super fun crafts group for all ages and abilities.

Bingo

📅 6 December, 17 January, 21 February and
20 March, 11am–12pm

Meet people, have fun and play some friendly bingo!

Board games

📅 6 December, 17 January, 21 February and
20 March, 12pm–1.30pm

Fun, friendly (unless you're the competitive type!) and a great way to meet new people in your community.

Live in Wecock? Join our new Creative Minds group at the Acorn Centre, PO8 9UX.

Join others in a safe and relaxing environment to create, chat and socialise. There's no set times so please use the contact info below if you're interested, or pop by the centre.

Want more information?

Email castiel.martin@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
or call 023 924 37641 or 07392 861452.



Save Money with the Portsmouth Leisure Card

The Portsmouth Leisure Card is a **free** card, available to people who get certain benefits in the PO1 to PO6 areas. It'll give you discounts of up to 50% at sports centres, swimming pools, golf courses, museums, city arts, beach huts, the Historic Dockyard, Southsea Skatepark, the Andrew Simpson Centre and more.

Interested?

Head to portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk to apply online or apply via your local library, community centre or housing office (remember to bring along proof of benefits).

Any questions, please call **023 9268 8797** or email culturalservices@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Eligible benefits:

- Universal credit
- Income support
- Working tax credit
- Housing benefit
- Asylum Seekers
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance (JSA)
- Income-related employment and support allowance (ESA)
- Council Tax Support (excludes statutory 25% single persons discount)
- Pension credit (guarantee credit element only)
- Foster carers with foster children
- Children in Supported Accommodation



Teen takeover

Well, not just yet. But going forward, we're handing over a couple pages of House Talk to teenagers to talk about the stuff that interests them.

Jokes, stories, art - you name it. Plus, it'll be a great way to gain experience in magazine editing. If you or someone you know wants to get stuck in, head to [Portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk](https://portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk) or email PYC at pyc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

FOR 11-16 YEAR OLDS

**HAF
FUN
POMPEY**

— YOUR FREE —

**FESTIVE
FLEX**

16-23 DECEMBER

SPORTS, FOOD AND FANTASTIC EVENTS

To book, search '**HAF Fun Pompey**'

PYC events

Brook Youth Club

Weekday evenings 6pm-9pm

At Somerstown Hub.

For ages 11-19. We have pool and table-tennis tables, Xbox, cooking & arts and craft every evening!

Under 15's youth football

Mondays 6pm-7pm

At Milton Cross Academy.

Under 18's youth volleyball

Fridays 5pm-9pm

At Priory School.

Under 19's youth basketball

Thursdays 6pm-8pm

At Charles Dickens Activity Centre.

Bridgeway Youth Hub

At St Luke's Church.

For ages 11-16. A place to come and chill, play some games and activities and chat about any issues that you may have.

Fratton Youth Hub Drop In

Thursdays 4pm-6pm

At Motiv8 Fratton, PO5 1AG. For ages 11-16. Come Hang Out, Play Games, Chill, Film Nights, Pool, Cooking, Food and Drinks!

Chill Hub

Thursdays 4.30pm-6pm

At Motiv8, St Margaret's Church, PO4 9DD. For ages 13+. A safe space to Chill Out, Play Games, Cook, Watch Films and Have Fun!

For a full list of things to do and youth clubs to check out, head to pycportsmouth.co.uk/youth

HOW WE SPEND YOUR MONEY

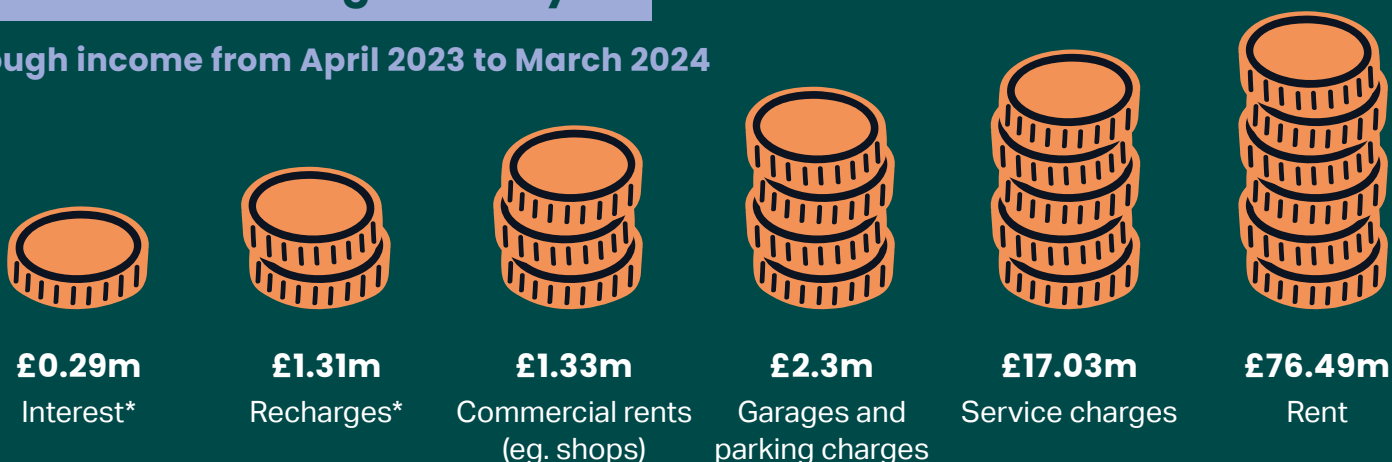


When you pay your rent, the money is put into the council's Housing Revenue Account. This pays for the housing services we offer to you.

Every March, we write to tell you how much your rent and service charge (if applicable) will be for the year ahead. Before this happens though, we'll always speak with as many of you as possible to hear your views.

How much we'll get from you

Rough income from April 2023 to March 2024



But this won't cover everything we do, so we also need to use £1.55m from council housing reserves.

How every £10 of that is spent

Rough costs from April 2023 to March 2024



*Interest is the money we earn on our cash balances (the money we have in our bank at any given time).

*Recharges are contributions to shared services from other parts of the council.

How much will I be paying next year?

We don't know yet how much you'll be paying for rent and service charges next year, but we do want you to be involved every step of the way.

Here's what's happening and when:

7 December

You can come to our resident consortium meeting to talk through the rent proposals.

Details: It's at 6pm and will be in room 3 of Somerstown Hub. Every tenant is welcome, and we can help with transport if you need it.

Just call us on **07392 861452**.



Early December

We'll send you a letter inviting you to the final resident meeting on this (4 January).

4 January 2024

This is the final resident meeting where you can give your views on what the new rent and service charges should be.

The meeting details will be in the letter you get in December.



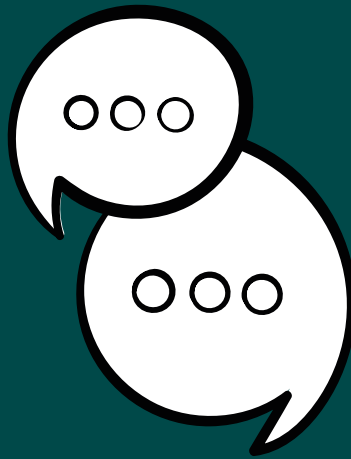
26 January 2024

Rent decision will be made.



1 April 2024

You start paying the new amounts.



In addition to all the normal landlord-y things (repairs etc), we make sure your money also goes towards building strong and happy communities.

Things like:



Adventure playgrounds



Youth Services



Community Centres, gardens, groups and clubs

And loads more!

Let's laugh!

HOW DID THE SNOW
GLOBE FEEL AFTER LISTENING
TO A SCARY STORY?

A BIT SHAKEN UP!

WHAT DID ONE
SNOWMAN SAY TO THE
OTHER SNOWMAN?

CAN YOU SMELL CARROTS?

WHAT DO YOU GET IF YOU CROSS
A SNOWMAN AND A SHARK?

FROST-BITE!

Let's eat!

The happy Oreo reindeer recipe

You will need:

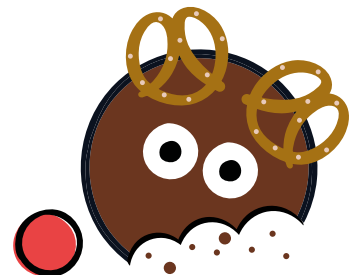
- **Edible eyes**
(£1.60 ASDA)
- **Red M&Ms**
(£1.50 ASDA)
- **Salted pretzels**
(85p ASDA)
- **Double stuff Oreos**
(£1.20 ASDA)
- **300g milk chocolate**
(£2.20 ASDA)



Method:

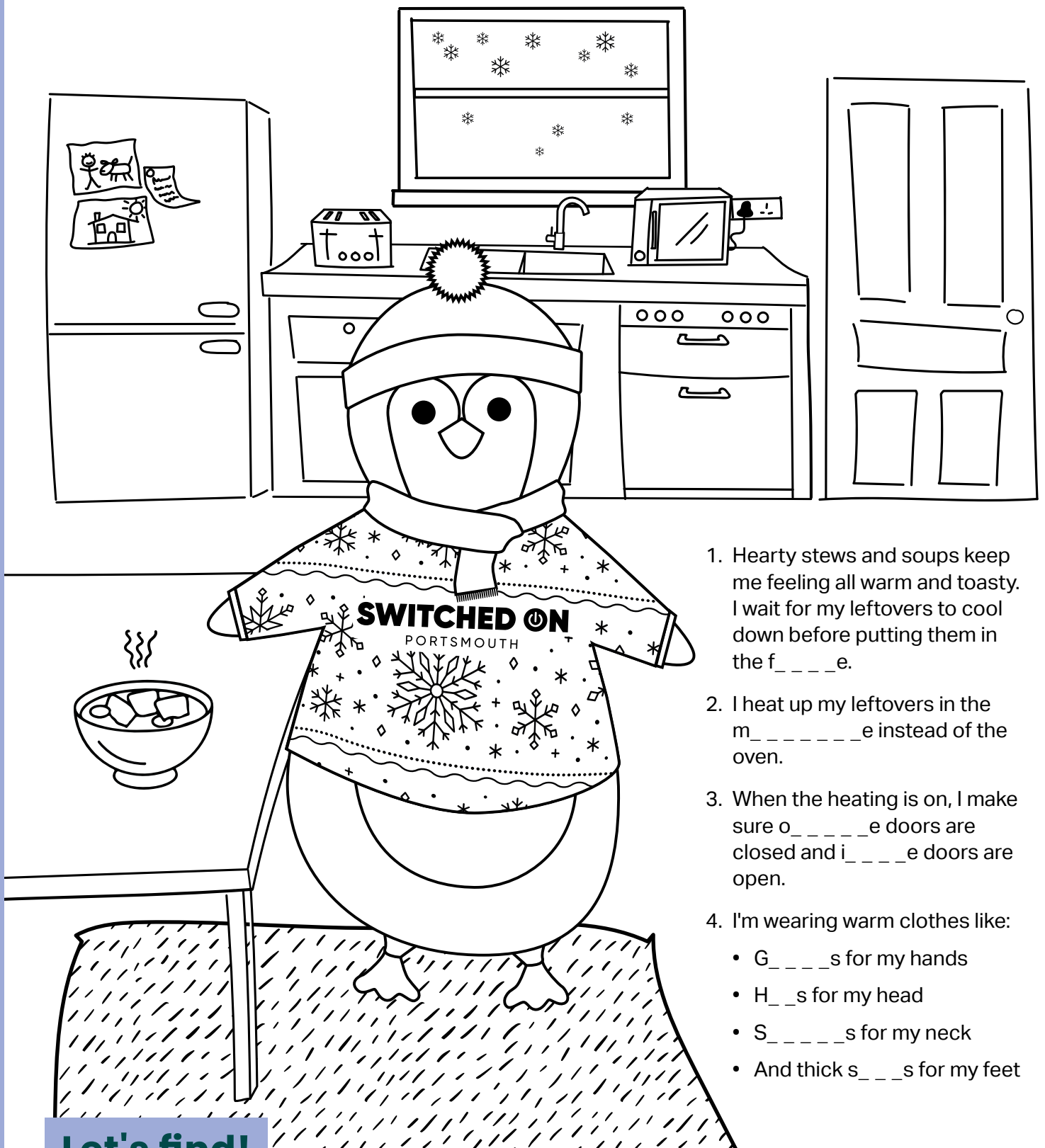
1. Melt the chocolate in the microwave for 30 seconds at a time, until you can stir it smooth.
2. Dip the Oreos in the melted chocolate.
3. Press two pretzels into the top of the Oreo to make the antlers.
4. Put two edible eyes in the middle of the Oreo, and a red M&M below them.
5. Let the chocolate harden in the fridge.

And enjoy!



Let's colour!

Can you help colour all the things Parker is doing to keep warm this winter? Can you also guess the things Parker is doing to help save energy?



1. Hearty stews and soups keep me feeling all warm and toasty. I wait for my leftovers to cool down before putting them in the f _ _ _ e.
2. I heat up my leftovers in the m _ _ _ _ _ e instead of the oven.
3. When the heating is on, I make sure o _ _ _ _ e doors are closed and i _ _ _ _ e doors are open.
4. I'm wearing warm clothes like:
 - G _ _ _ s for my hands
 - H _ _ s for my head
 - S _ _ _ _ s for my neck
 - And thick s _ _ _ s for my feet

Let's find!

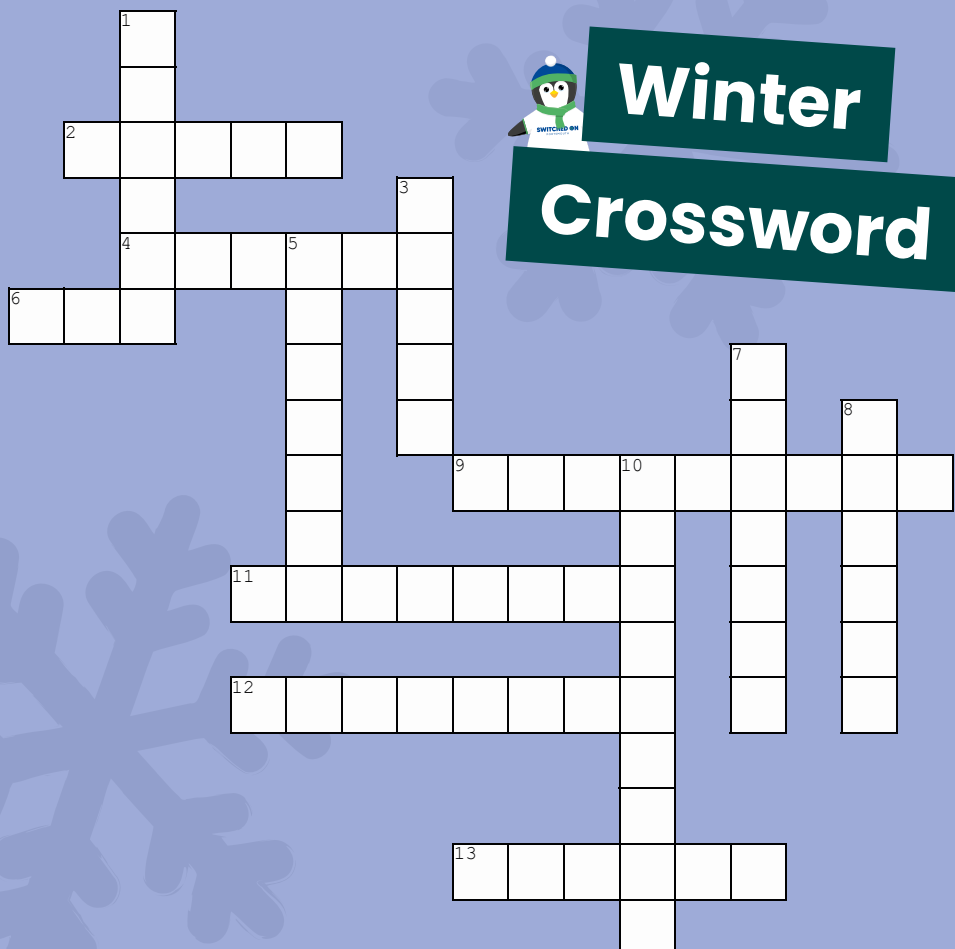
Psst...we've hidden Parker the Penguin in lots of different places in this magazine! See how many you can find and write your total in the box.

Answers: 1. fridge, 2. microwave, 3. outside and inside, 4. gloves, hats, scarfs and socks. There were 10 Parker's in total!

Winter Wordsearch

BLIZZARD **ICE**
BOOTS **ICICLE**
CHILLY **JACK FROST**
COAT **SCARF**
COLD **SKIING**
FIREPLACE **SLEDGE**
FREEZING **SLIPPERY**
GLOVES **SNOW**
HAT **WINTER**

X	O	G	T	I	F	D	Z	V	I	F	R	A	C	S
I	P	O	C	C	R	Y	R	N	M	F	S	I	B	A
C	E	H	O	R	Z	G	X	A	S	L	E	D	G	E
I	U	A	W	F	I	V	V	O	Z	D	W	X	T	J
C	T	Y	R	E	P	P	I	L	S	Z	W	W	K	H
L	F	R	E	E	Z	I	N	G	F	M	I	R	S	V
E	D	R	C	W	J	B	B	J	E	G	R	L	N	H
S	P	I	Q	H	R	E	T	N	I	W	I	P	B	Q
J	T	L	R	A	S	T	S	O	R	F	K	C	A	J
X	E	O	A	T	J	K	Z	G	V	D	G	S	O	A
F	P	D	O	Y	R	N	I	X	C	W	L	G	C	Q
N	O	L	B	B	K	R	J	I	L	X	O	V	K	G
J	V	O	C	H	I	L	L	Y	N	S	V	N	H	X
R	E	C	A	L	P	E	R	I	F	G	E	A	S	O
R	H	D	X	C	N	A	I	N	R	V	S	S	I	Q



Winter Crossword

Across

- Deck the halls with boughs of? (5)
- Shiny Thin Tree Decoration (6)
- To the World (3)
- They are hung by the Chimney (9)
- Winter month (8)
- Under the Tree (8)
- Circular Tree Branch (6)

Down

- 'The' Snowman (6)
- Santa's Helpers (5)
- Christmas Hater (7)
- One of Santa's Reindeer (7)
- Christmas Drink (6)
- 25 December (9)

Crossword answers: Across: 2. Holly 4. Tinsel 6. Joy 9. Stockings 11. December 12. Presents 13. Wreath.
Down: 1. Frosty 3. Elves 5. Scrooge 7. Blitzen 8. Eggnog 10. Christmas

You still have time to win an iPad or £100

Your views matter. That's why we're giving you the chance to tell us what you think of the homes and services we provide as your landlord.

Take a five minute survey and you could win one of three prizes up for grabs - a brand new iPad and two x £100 vouchers! We thought these goodies would be the perfect Christmas treat, so we'll announce the winners in December.

Take the survey now at www.portsmouth.gov.uk/tenantsurvey2023 or call **023 92834 835** if you need help.

Survey closes 10 December. For full survey and competition details, call the number above or visit www.portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk

Scan the code to take the survey



£100



Let's waste less

Want help to save money, space and carbon? Repair Café Portsmouth is here to make it easier for you to repair, donate, sell and recycle your unwanted small electrical items.

With the help of funding from Virgin Media O2, we've created a map showing where you can repair, donate, sell or recycle in the city: www.shareportsmouth.org.uk/unwanted-electricals

So whether you're motivated by money, space or climate concerns, visit the map today to find local places to help.

And did you know you can now borrow items from Portsmouth Library of Things? So if you're decorating, organising a party, wanting to try a new craft or travel, consider borrowing rather than buying. You'll be saving money and space.

For more information call **07579 026568**, visit www.shareportsmouth.org.uk/borrow or email hello@shareportsmouth.org.uk

Let's get neighbourly



Maria's retirement

After 18 years of being a spokesperson for you and all our tenants, Maria Cole has decided to call it a well-deserved day.

A local tenant herself, Maria became involved with our resident engagement team when she first moved here. She was then elected to go to meetings with the people in charge of council housing to give her views.

What's been great about Maria in these meetings is that she'll ask the hard questions and give her thoughts, good or bad.

And being a tenant herself, she's always represented the views of the people at the heart of what we do - you.

Because of this, she's had a real impact on the housing service over the years.

"I've always been able to ask questions and make any comments, and although I didn't always agree, I always had the opportunity to share my views. After 18 years, I have decided to retire, although I may still drop in on the meetings as a resident."

We say a huge thank you to you, Maria, for your time and dedication - it's been an absolute pleasure and we hope you enjoy some well-earned rest.

Want to follow in Maria's footsteps? Give Heidi Golder a bell on **07930 187285** or email her at heidi.golder@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Our newest 'great neighbour' is... Jean!

Meet Jean Louth, the latest winner of our 'Great Neighbour' award.

We're in awe of Jean, and here's why: For starters, Jean spent 27 years campaigning to fund a memorial remembering everyone from Portsmouth who died during the Second World War.

After raising over £300,000, the memorial now stands in Guildhall Square and features the names of 3,436 armed forces personnel – including Jean's own father, Harry Short – who was killed in Dunkirk.

When we caught up with Jean at her home in Lyndhurst House to tell her how inspirational she is, she said "How wonderful! But somebody had to do it - it had to be done!"

Go on, celebrate one your neighbours - we know there's so many good people in our communities. Call us on **023 9283 4835** or email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk to submit a nomination.



Good things happening in your city



On 9 and 10 September, the city hosted its first ever Look Up street art festival. Local legends like My Dog Sighs joined global artists to paint dozens of blank walls across the two days. They brought artworks full of colour, energy and life into the heart of our city.

We worked with as many of you as possible to see if you wanted any art on your walls, and if so, what sort of art you like. We also gave you the opportunity take part in some really cool art workshops for free.

Two takeaways from the event:

- We absolutely love the results, and we hope you do too.
- This is just the start! Watch this space for future art projects in your area that you can get involved in (especially in Havant where we want to expand this festival to next year!)

"In Central Street, the residents adopted the artists – giving them parking permits, letting them use their toilets and going to the shops to get them icepops while they were working in the sun – it was lovely."

Angela, festival organiser

"It's so good to see some colour, the place has been so drab".

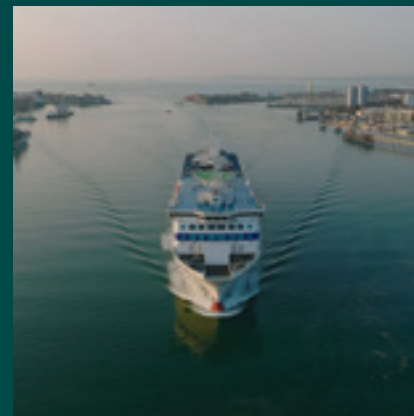
From an interested residents.

For more information on the festival and how we use art in our services, contact Andrew Malbon by calling **023 9283 4711** or emailing **andrew.malbon@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

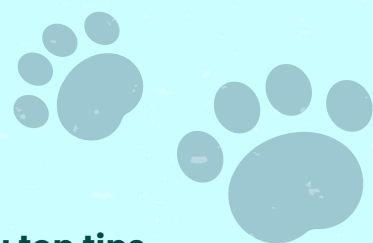
The Port improving air quality

Portsmouth International Port will soon be able to let ships to 'plug-in' when they are at the port, so they can switch off their engines. This 'shore power' system, made possible by a £19.8m grant from the government, will help to improve air quality at the port and for neighbouring communities.

You can find out more at **portsmouth-port.co.uk**



Let's talk dogs



Our expert team at Portsmouth Stray Dog Kennels are giving you top tips on how to keep pooches safe and happy this Christmas.

1. MICROCHIP, MICROCHIP, MICROCHIP!

It may seem like a simple tip, but you'd be amazed at how many dogs end up as strays because people don't bother with it.

- It's a legal requirement.
- It'll give you the **best** chance to reunite with your pup if they go missing or get stolen.
- If you breed a dog (even accidentally), it's your responsibility to have all the puppies microchipped by the time they're 8 weeks old, and to register yourself as their first owner.
- If you own a dog, it's your responsibility to keep their microchip details up to date. If you're not sure, use **www.checkachip.com** to check which microchip database your dog is registered with.
- If your dog is scanned by a dog warden and found not to have a microchip, you'll have 21 days to get them microchipped. If you don't, you could face a fine of up to £500.
- Microchipping only costs around £12 at our dog kennels. Or you can contact local dog charities who might offer to do it for free or at a lower price.

2. ID tags

Like microchipping, your dog must legally wear a collar and ID tag (or you could face more fines). There are so many different and cool tag designs to choose from, there's really no excuse not to have one!

You can get one engraved at your local Pets at Home or order one online, you just need to make sure you include your name and address (though we'd say to add your phone number too).

So if you've now realised that your dog doesn't have an ID tag, go get one ASAP as an early Christmas present to yourself and your little bestie!

In the last six months,
we've taken in 53 dogs

77% of them had the
wrong microchip details

100% of them had
no ID tag!



3. Fireworks

Whether we like them or not, there's going to be a lot of fireworks over Christmas.

They can be really upsetting to our dogs, so here's what you can do to help:

- Block out flashes and bangs. Close any windows or curtains and turn the lights on. Put on music or the TV to help disguise the noise.
- If your dog wants to hide, let them stay where they feel safe.
- If they want comforting, calmly give them attention. Research shows that ignoring them won't help.
- If your dog doesn't seem worried, then it's best to keep them busy with their favourite toys or activities so they don't become anxious.
- Try to stay calm and relaxed yourself. Your dog will pick up on how you're feeling, so do your best to relax.
- If your dog makes a mess by accident, avoid telling them off as this might make them feel more scared.
- Speak to your vet if you can, as medications can really help.
- Check your house and garden are escape-proof. Your dog could try to run away if they're scared so check your doors, windows and fences are secure.



4. Cheap and easy DIY dog treats

Once you've made these for your dog, maybe they won't feel as jealous when we're eating our roast dinners...

You'll need:

- **85g natural peanut butter**
(really important - make sure the only ingredient is peanuts)
- **A ripe banana**
(though you can do this with just oats and peanut butter if you're out of bananas)
- **180g rolled oats**

Method:

1. Using a fork, mash together the rolled oats with the peanut butter and banana in a bowl. Add more oats if the mixture is too wet.
2. With your hands, roll out the dough into any shape of your choice (little balls, discs - you could even cut them into bone shapes if you're feeling creative!)
3. Leave them to set either on the counter or in the fridge.

Say 'who's a good boy/girl?!' as you give your dog their new treats.

Bonus tip! These make great treats for hiding your dogs' pills in.

Contact information

✉ dog.kennels@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

☎ 023 9268 8091

📍 Great Salterns Farm on Burrfields Road, Portsmouth, PO3 5HH

Move to Universal Credit Managed Migration

As covered in the last House Talk, the government's started moving people on old style 'legacy' benefits to Universal Credit (UC). It started in September, but only for people claiming tax credits with no other legacy benefits (like housing benefit).

The invite



They'll invite people to claim UC by sending a letter which looks like this:



The leaflet



Not to be confused with this leaflet, which isn't the invitation:



I've got the letter, what do I do now?

Speak to your housing officer and ask for a benefit check. It's important you do this as some people will be worse off as a result of the move.

The government's awarding 'transitional protection' to make sure people aren't any worse off at the time of changing over though. You should also make sure you're not being underpaid any benefits because you can't correct this after making the move to UC.

When will I get transactional protection?

It'll only be given to people who apply for UC after they've received the letter. That's why it's important to apply at the right time.

If you're unsure about anything or need any help, contact your local housing office (contact information on page 2).



Support with energy bills

Fourteen energy companies have agreed to a plan called the Winter 2023 Voluntary Debt Commitment. This plan was created by Citizens Advice, Energy UK, and Ofgem to help people who are having trouble paying their gas and electric bills.

They will offer different types of help, like:

- letting you take a break from making payments
- changing the way you pay your bills to make it easier
- giving you money to pay for energy if you have a special meter
- helping you get rid of the debt you owe
- providing you with energy-efficient appliances
- giving away free electric blankets
- reducing the basic charge for energy

Most energy companies will also give you a £150 discount to help with your winter bills. In England, you don't have to apply for this discount – it should come automatically during the winter period.

If you're worried about paying your gas and electric bills, make sure to contact your energy company as soon as you can.

Are you owed bereavement benefit?

The deadline to claim backdated bereavement benefit has been extended to 8 February 2024.

Unmarried couples who lived together, were eligible for child benefit, or were pregnant when their partner died, can now apply for help.

Claims can be backdated as far back as 30 August 2018.

You can apply online at **gov.uk**, by calling **0800 151 2012**, or by picking up a form at your local Jobcentre Plus.

Damp and mould

During winter we see more issues with damp and mould in your homes.

You can look out for mould by checking the corners and borders of your home for any dark spots or patches. Mould can also create a musty smell in the home.

Top tips to reduce mould in your home:

- Ventilate rooms by turning on extractor fans or opening windows slightly when you're doing things like cooking, showering or drying clothes.
- It's recommended to keep rooms between 18-21°C to keep you warm and healthy.
- Wipe condensation off windows and window sills as often as you can.

Remember, if you spot any signs of black mould, even a small amount, you should report it to the repairs team straight away. Treating it sooner rather than later can stop the mould spreading.

For more tips visit www.portsmouth.gov.uk/housetalk

To contact the repairs support team about damp, mould, window opening restrictors or asbestos, email repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call **023 9284 1311**.



If you have a balcony, it's important to be aware of safety for you and your family. We've put together some guidelines:

- Use window opening restrictors. If you don't have them or they're not working, contact us and we'll install new ones.
- Keep your balcony door locked when not in use.
- Never allow young children access to a balcony without an adult present.
- If you have young children, consider installing a child-proof gate that you can lock when you're not in the room and don't want to lock the balcony door.

Here's a few other things to remember to keep your balcony safe:

- Never lean over, sit or climb on the balcony wall or railing.
- Never try to pass items to someone on another balcony.
- Never try to climb onto another balcony from your balcony.
- Keep balcony furniture away from the railing, and heavy enough so children can't drag it to climb up on.
- Don't store waste on balconies (this includes BBQs, gas bottles and heaters).
- White goods like fridges should **not** be stored or used on balconies.
- If you smoke on a balcony, extinguish cigarettes properly - do not discard them on or over your balcony.
- Don't modify your balcony.
- Remember that netting to prevent birds accessing your balcony is not safety netting.

To contact the repairs support team about damp, mould, window opening restrictors or asbestos, email repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call **023 9284 1311**.



Switched on Portsmouth

If you're worried about your energy bills this winter, you might be eligible for a few schemes to help lower those costs.

As council tenant, you might be able to get:

- Free energy saving advice and in depth case support
- Free replacement of old white goods
- Free home insulation measures
- Free installation of solar panels and air-source heat pumps
- Grants for boiler upgrades
- Households could get up to £38,000 worth of energy saving improvements if they're:
 - On a low income or receive means tested benefits
 - Living in a home with an EPC rating of D or below (you can find this out on Switched on Portsmouth's website)
 - In a household not heated from a gas boiler

Find out more:

Visit www.switchedonportsmouth.co.uk/apply or call the freephone on **0800 260 5907**.

There are schemes for all household types (on and off gas).

Visit the Switched on Portsmouth website to find out more at www.switchedonportsmouth.co.uk

Keep yourself in the loop:

 Switched On Portsmouth

 Switched On Portsmouth

 @SwitchedOnPorts

SWITCHED ON
PORTSMOUTH

Asbestos

Your home may contain asbestos without you knowing, but it's usually safe unless it gets damaged or disturbed. That's why it's always best to leave asbestos alone if possible.

Our #1 tip: Don't try to repair or remove any asbestos materials yourself if you haven't had training.

If you're planning any alterations to your home, wanting any advice regarding asbestos or reporting any damage to what you think is asbestos then contact the repairs support team before you do anything.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Let's talk about mental health

We all have days where we feel anxious, sad, angry or worried. Having emotions like this is normal.

But if you or a loved one have been dealing with difficult feelings for a while, and it's affecting things like sleep, socialising, eating or work/studying, then reaching out is important. Especially as we head into Christmas, which can be one of the more stressful times of the year.

But who can you turn to?

There're so many options out there for you. That's why a great first step would be to call our amazing and friendly team at the Portsmouth Mental Health Hub.

They'll listen and connect you to the right support for you or a loved one. You can call them Monday to Friday, 8am–6pm, on **0300 123 6621**, or you can visit www.mentalhealthinportsmouth.co.uk

Did you know...

Studies show that something as simple as writing down 5 things you're grateful for once a week can boost your happiness by as much as 25%.

With Christmas being the season of giving and receiving, why don't you try giving this a go this year?

Remember, free mental health services are available, and people are here to help.

Portsea residents – have your say on health and wellbeing

If you live in Portsea, please complete our short survey to help us better understand your health and wellbeing needs. The survey takes around five minutes and will be used by the council and NHS to understand how local health services are working. Complete the survey at www.research.net/r/portseahealthsurvey

Happy and healthy living in Paulsgrove

Paulsgrove residents are invited to take part in a new community project to encourage healthier lifestyles in the area. A team of people from the council, NHS and other partners have come together to find out what people like about living in Paulsgrove, ideas to make it even better, and ways to work together to encourage healthier living.

The first community meeting took place at St. Michael and All Angel's Church last month with more planned for the future.

If you'd like to get involved in future conversations, get in touch with our Health and Care Portsmouth team by emailing healthandcare@portsmouthcc.gov.uk



16-23 December
Throughout Portsmouth

YUMMY FOOD AND FANTASTIC ACTIVITIES
FREE AND PAY-AS-YOU-GO SPACES AVAILABLE

To book, search 'HAF Fun Pompey'

Staying safe this winter



Eastney local Margaret has been using Safe at Home services for years now, and she says she couldn't live without it.

With another cold and wet season ahead, now's the time to be taking the same steps Margaret did to ensure you and your loved ones stay safe and warm.

Here's three quick ways to keep your elderly loved ones safe and warm this winter:

- 1. Personal alarms.** Elderly relatives are more at risk of falls in the winter. A wearable personal alarm can ensure they'll always have somebody to call for help. It's a life-saving measure that'll give you and your family peace of mind. Head to www.wearesafeathome.co.uk for more info or call **023 9283 4460**.
- 2. Free home upgrades.** A warm home is a safe home, and your elderly relatives are probably entitled to free home improvements that will reduce their heating bills and save on energy. It's 100% worth checking out, so head to www.switchedonportsmouth.co.uk now or call their freephone on **0800 260 5907**.
- 3. Get ahead of scam callers.** Telecare services using old landline systems are going through a 'digital switchover'. Scam callers are using this to target older people into giving them their bank details. Safe at Home has always been digital, so any calls from them about this will be a scam. Make sure you and your loved ones are aware and to report any scam calls to **0300 123 2040**.



Who might knock on my door?

It's important you know who's knocking and what they're doing.

As one of our tenants, you've got loads of different teams of people working for you and your homes. This means they might need to visit you from time to time. Always ask for ID and don't let anyone in if you're unsure.

Estate wardens and community wardens

May visit you in response to a neighbourhood concern or any problems in the communal area.
They'll be wearing uniform and carrying a council ID.

Anti-social behaviour officers

May visit you in response to antisocial behaviour concerns in your area.
They'll be carrying council ID.

Repairs contractors or their sub-contractors

(Mountjoy, Liberty or Comserv)

They're usually there to carry out repairs, but it could also be because there's an issue in your building.
They'll be wearing uniform and carrying ID.

Resident engagement team

They might visit to give updates on things relevant to you, to ask your views, or to let you know how to get involved. They'll be carrying council ID.

Housing officers

May visit about rent or other housing issues like tenancy checks. They'll be carrying council ID.

Surveyors

May visit you to assess your home for a repair or to check the condition of your property.
They'll be carrying council ID.

Out of hours team

May visit you outside of normal working hours in response to a concern that's been raised.
They'll be wearing uniform and carrying council ID.

Safe at Home team

May visit you in response to a call for help.
They'll be carrying council ID.

Sheltered housing team

They'll visit you to offer support and check-ins.
They'll be carrying council ID.

When you don't know where to turn, turn to us

Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Service, Portsmouth

The rising cost of living means that many people affected by cancer are having tough choices to make. We know living with less money can be a struggle, particularly if you've had to stop working or reduce your hours because of cancer.

If you need help managing bills, advice on what benefits you might be entitled to, or just want to chat about how you're feeling, we're here to help, no matter what your situation.

Open Monday – Friday, 10am-4.00pm
Queen Alexandra Hospital, B Level, Cosham, Portsmouth PO6 3LY
Alternatively, visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk) or call **0808 304 6555**

Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604). MAC19670_House Talk



Visit our web page

In partnership with

