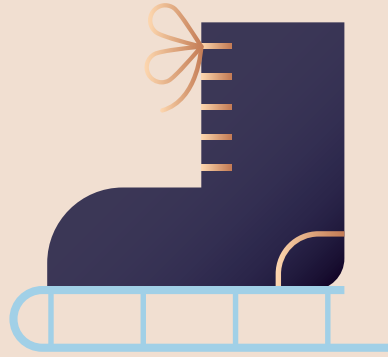


house talk

Winter 2024 • for council tenants and leaseholders • keeping you informed



Say hello to Portsmouth Homes

Page 9



Don't despair, report your repair!

Page 22



**Changes to how we
allocate housing**

Page 6

**Have you applied for
pension credit yet?**

Page 24

**Two chances
to win £250!**

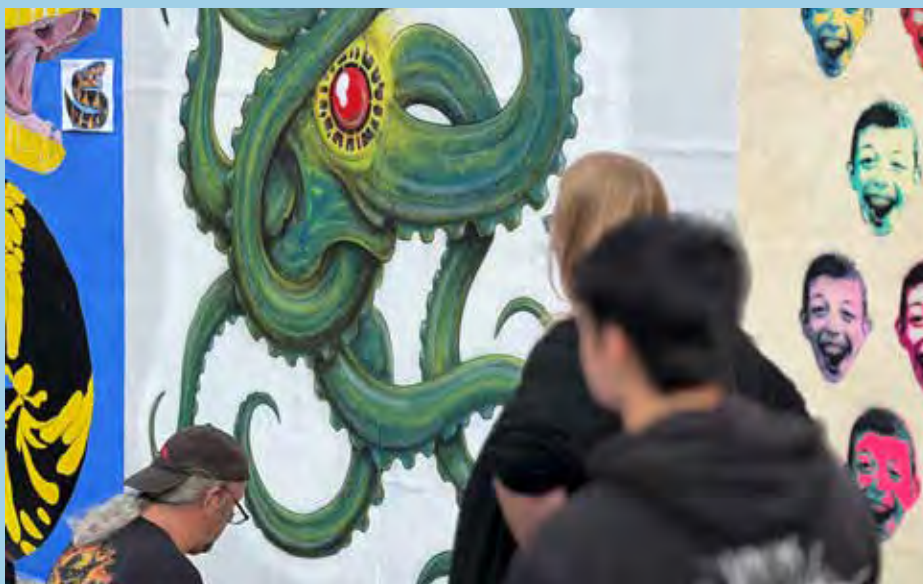
Page 12 & 22



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 Participation Centre, 37 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?

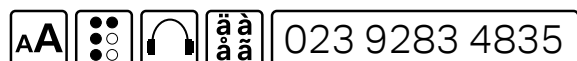
Chcesz mieć ten magazyn w innym języku?

想要这本杂志的不同语言版本吗?

একটি ভিন্ন ভাষায় এই পত্রিকা চান?

Call/Dzwonić/称呼/কল: 023 9283 4835

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



CommunityFunds4U



How CommunityFunds4U is transforming local social life

Thanks to the resident engagement team's unique funding project, CommunityFunds4U, we've got brand new social groups up and running across your housing estates. The funding is helping tenants like you get equipment, room hire and all-round support. Let's check out some of the groups we've helped so far:

Women's Cross-Cultural Group (WCCG)



Helped by purchasing sewing machines and finding hire space

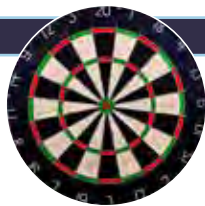
The WCCG brings together women from different backgrounds, learning a host of new skills like sewing or upcycling. It's a place where everyone feels welcome, regardless of their language skills, and a group which directly benefits the mental health and wellbeing of the women who attend.

"A big thank you to resident engagement for supporting us. It's enabled our group to provide invaluable learning skills to the women who access our service."

Pickwick House Snooker and Darts club

Helped by buying equipment

"We're really pleased to be able to offer snooker and darts to all age groups, and hopefully more people will join in as the days close in. Thank you very much for the funding to start up this new activity."



The Beeches

Helped by buying gardening tools

Inspired by the late Brandon James, who tended the gardens at The Beeches estate in Waterlooville, residents came together to create this relaxed and friendly gardening group in his memory.

Follow Your Dreamz performing arts group

Helped by providing funding

"The voucher received from CommunityFunds4U means so much to us and the children. It allows us to give them some food options whilst helping parents with the cost of living too. It's been a great help, thank you."



Interested in joining any of these groups or feeling inspired to start one of your own?

Call **023 9283 4835** or email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk now!

HOW WE SPEND YOUR MONEY

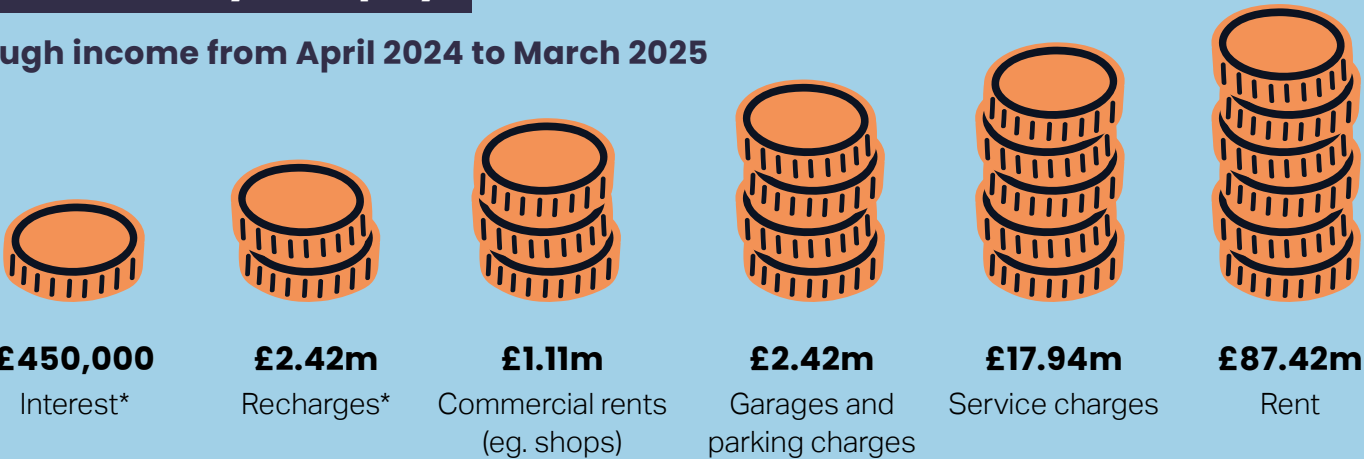


When you pay your rent, the money is put into the council’s Housing Revenue Account. This pays for the housing services we offer to you.

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 you'll pay

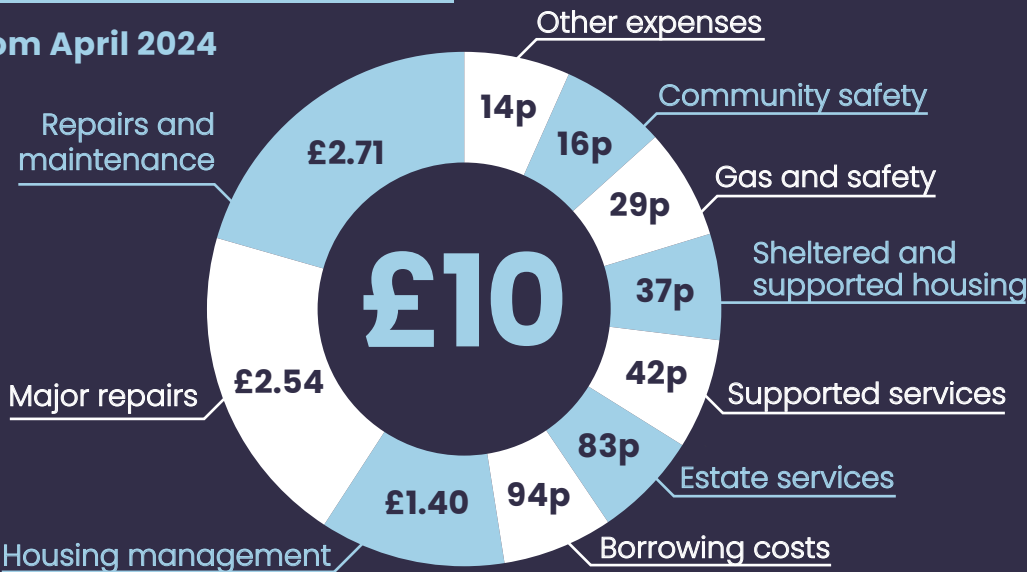
Rough income from April 2024 to March 2025



But this won't cover everything we do, so we also need to use £450,000 from council housing reserves account.

How every £10 of that is spent

Rough costs from April 2024 to March 2025



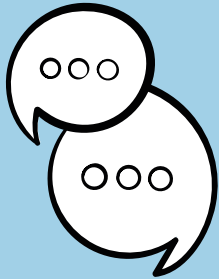
*Interest is the money we earn on our cash balances (the money we have in our bank at any given time)
**Recharges are contributions to shared services from other parts of the council.

How much will I be paying next year?

The government has set a maximum limit on how much council rents can increase – this limit is 2.7%. The exact amount of any increase hasn't been decided yet, and we'll let you know of any changes before they take place.

Looking ahead, the government plans to continue setting similar yearly limits until at least 2031, based on The Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%*. They're also discussing if a longer agreement would help.

Here's what's happening and when:



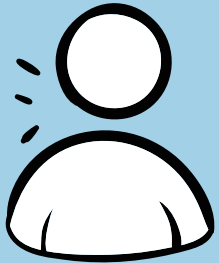
Thursday 5 December 2024

- Paulsgrove Community Centre lounge, 10am
- Leigh Park's Resident Participation Centre, 1pm
- Somerstown Hub, room 3, 6pm

This year we've added more ways for you to talk through the rent proposals. You can come to our resident consortium meeting at Somerstown Hub, or, new for this year, come along to a session in Paulsgrove or Leigh Park.

Every tenant is welcome, and we can help with transport if you need it.

☎ Call us on **023 9283 4835** if you're interested.



Monday 9 December 2024

If you can't make any of the meetings on 5 December, there will be another chance to hear about the proposals with an online presentation at 6pm on Monday 9 December.

Email or call us if you're interested:

✉ housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

☎ **023 9283 4835**



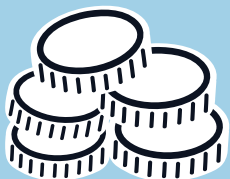
Early December 2024

We'll send you a letter inviting you to the final resident meeting on this (9 January).



Monday 9 January 2025

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.



Wednesday 22 January 2025

Rent decisions will be made.

1 April 2025

You start paying the new amounts.

*The CPI measures how much prices have gone up across the country – things like food, clothing, and fuel. So if the CPI rate is 1.7%, the government will add 1% and ensure rents don't go above that number (2.7% in this case, but it could change each year).

What does Portsmouth City Council's new allocations policy mean for me?

We told you in our last issue that we were looking at our allocations policy (how people in Portsmouth are allocated social housing). As part of that we wrote to everyone on the Portsmouth City Council housing register.

Firstly, thank you to all of you who gave your views. We reached nearly 1,300 people across Portsmouth, which is amazing.

The new allocation policy has now been approved. This means that from now on, more properties will go to existing council or housing association tenants – meaning their old home is available for someone else on the register. This means more people will live in the right type of home.

If you're living in a home that was assigned to you by Portsmouth City Council, or are already on the Portsmouth housing register with a move request, you don't need to do anything unless you need to let us know if you've been in care in Portsmouth at any point in your childhood, or if you have an armed forces connection.

Learn more by asking your housing officer or visiting **portsmouth.gov.uk/housingpolicy**



Say hello to your new...

Head of compliance

Amy Holmes

Taking on this key role, Amy will be making sure your homes are safe, well maintained, and that they meet the latest safety regulations.

She'll cover everything from gas safety checks to building fire risk assessments.

Amy started at the council as a trainee building surveyor in August 2013 and was most recently our building safety manager.

Amy is keen to apply her wealth of experience to making sure your homes stay safe and well maintained.



Policy

updates

Know where to find them

Housing policies make a real difference to your day-to-day life. That's why we work hard to make sure you know when they happen, that you have a say in any updates, and that you know how to find them.

Why should you know about them?

Whilst we tell you about all the important updates, knowing the policies yourself will empower you to understand your rights, access available support, and stay informed about how decisions affecting your home are made.

Find all our housing policies at portsmouth.gov.uk/housingpolicy

Want to influence future policy updates? Contact us using the details on the right →



HRA building safety manager*

Will George

Will, working with Amy in compliance, will make sure our tall blocks of flats (seven or more floors) meet safety rules set by the Building Safety Regulator.

He'll do this by ensuring regular checks for fire and structural risks, and that you're all kept informed about your building's safety.

Having joined the council in 2017, Will's background in financial services and recent role as principal building surveyor adds valuable expertise to this important role, and he's ready to join Amy in ensuring the safety of your homes.

PS. Did you know you can help us hire for roles like these?

We invite tenants like you to be part of the interview process, so you can help choose the candidates who will best represent your interests and priorities.

Contact us at housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or **023 9283 4835** if you want to find out more.

**HRA stands for housing revenue account*

New rules for social housing landlords



You may or may not be aware of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), but they set consumer standards for social housing landlords.

From April this year, the way we're regulated by them, and what we need to achieve, changed.

Now, all social housing landlords will be inspected once every four years to check they're meeting the standards. It's like an OFSTED inspection in schools, and we take it very seriously.

We're also responsible for reviewing our progress and reporting any gaps in achieving the standards to the RSH – a process called self-referral.

We recently completed a self-referral.

We recently did a self-referral. It showed:

Our strengths:

- 😊 Responsive repairs service
- 😊 Excellent out-of-hours service
- 😊 Strong community connections
- 😊 Positive tenant satisfaction scores

Our areas to improve:

- Upgrading our buildings to meet new fire and building safety regulations
- Deepening our knowledge of our buildings and your needs as tenants
- Better handling of anti-social behaviour and complaints

- Improving our data so we can work smarter, and better demonstrate our performance

Overall, we believe your homes are safe and in a reasonable condition, and most of you said you're happy with our services, based on our most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey result.

If you have any concerns about your home or suggestions for how we can improve, make sure to tell us via your housing office so we can investigate and respond.

What's next

The regulator is still reviewing our self-referral and the information we gave them. We'll keep you all informed of the outcome of their review and any next steps.

Visit portsmouth.gov.uk/landlordperformance to find out more.

Introducing Portsmouth Homes

As part of our work to make sure you're always in the loop, we've come up with a new style for everything we send to you as your landlord.

Whether it's home safety, complaints, compliments or communal areas – everything we send you from now on will have the Portsmouth Homes name on it.

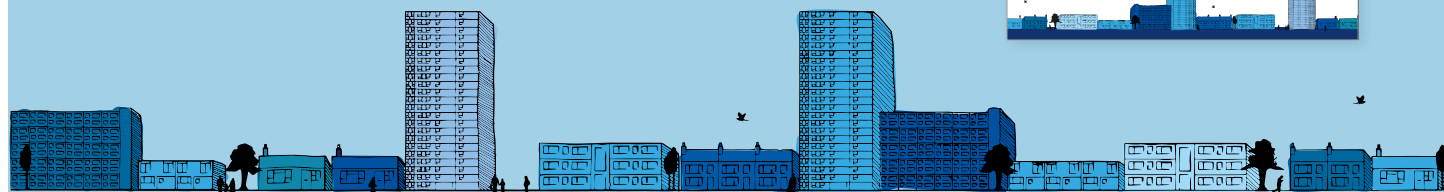
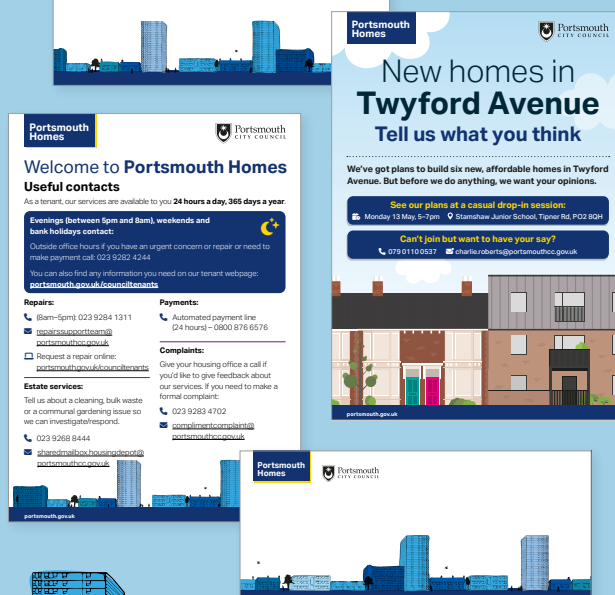
This will help you understand when you're receiving services from us as your landlord, and when you're receiving services funded through council tax from your local authority.

Here's a sneak peak of the new style.

Love it? Got some feedback? Get in touch with housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call **023 9283 4835** and let us know!

Portsmouth Homes

Welcome to Portsmouth Homes



Somers Orchard project: Plans for 566 new homes now approved

You might've already seen it in the news, but you'll be pleased to hear that the Somers Orchard plans were officially given the green light in August.

In summary, the plans will bring:

- 319 flats which will be allocated to people on our housing register.
- 247 flats (at least 20% of which will be classed as affordable homes) to be built and let by a third-party landlord.
- A range of community gardens for residents to use, including the recently opened Somers Orchard Community Garden.
- A focus on secure cycle storage, excellent public transport links, and proximity to shops and amenities which reduces reliance on cars in a busy city area.

You can see the full plans at portsmouth.gov.uk/somersorchard

Upcoming resident consortium dates

Mark your calendars for these upcoming meetings! They all take place in room 4 at Somerstown Hub, but we can help you with transport if you're not local – just contact us using the details below.

- **Talking changes to rents with Alan Denford, finance manager**
5 December, 6-8pm and
9 January 2025, 11am-1pm
- **Talking about repairs with Steve Groves, head of building maintenance**
6 February 2025, 6-8pm
- **Talking about your estate services with Phil Bentley, head of estate services**
6 March 2025, 11am-1pm

Simply turn up or contact us using the details at the bottom of this page if you're interested in joining and want to know more. Plus, if you bring along the voucher below, you'll get a free hot drink at the Hub Café!



FREE DRINK

1. Bring this voucher with you to a future resident consortium meeting.
2. Get it signed by a member of the resident engagement team.
3. Get your free hot drink at the Somerstown Hub Café!

Signed:

Resident focus groups

Making a difference together



Our resident focus groups have been hard at work, meeting with representatives from various services to review information, ask questions, and suggest changes. Here's what they've been up to:

- The communications group worked with our building safety manager, Amy Holmes, and our comms team on new safety leaflets which you'll get in the next few months.
- Our House Talk group helped produce this very issue!
- Our policy group helped our policy officer, Sara Craig, get 13 new policies approved in September. Check them out at portsmouth.gov.uk/housingpolicy
- Our scrutiny group is reviewing our response to anti-social behaviour in communal areas and neighbourhoods.
- Our estate services group learned how our estate wardens investigate and prevent bulk fly-tipping, and gave suggestions on how we could better educate residents about it.
- Our repairs group are reviewing how we deliver repairs and have held Q&As with residents.

Interested in joining? It's super easy, and you'll be making a real difference – just contact us.

 housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

 **023 9283 4835**

South Coast Training

Learning and networking opportunity

Twice a year, we and seven other housing providers host a conference at the Novotel Hotel in Southampton, designed for you to come along to.

These events offer you:

- Professional training on topics like welfare reform, tackling anti-social behaviour, housing law, mental health, and public speaking.
- Opportunities to network with residents from other towns and organisations.
- A chance to share ideas and compare experiences in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.
- Free lunch, refreshments, and transport.

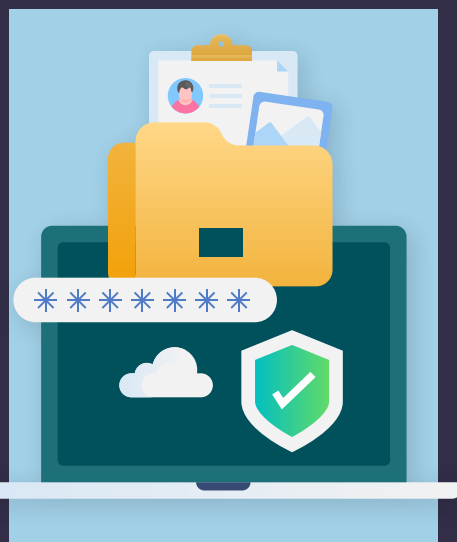
Don't miss this unique chance to learn, grow, and connect with your community! If you fancy joining us at the next South Coast Training event, contact us using the details at the bottom of page 10.

Your data and the National Fraud Initiative: what you need to know

Did you know we participate in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to help prevent and detect fraud? This means we'll securely compare some of the information you've given us (like your name, address, and housing details) with data from other public services.

The NFI initiative helps us make sure housing and benefits go to those who genuinely need them. Your personal information is protected by strict data protection laws, and we only use it for this specific purpose. We won't share it with private companies or use it for marketing.

If you have any questions about how we handle your data or the NFI process, please contact your housing office.



Meet the tenants

who represent you



From left to right: Greg, Mandy and Mary

Hi, we're your resident representative team.

We're a group of tenants and leaseholders, your neighbours, who represent your views during key decisions at each 'housing and tackling homelessness' meeting throughout the year.

These meetings cover critical topics that affect our communities, including:

- Housing policies and services
- Strategies to tackle homelessness
- Improvements to resident living conditions

How we're chosen

Every November, at the resident consortium, three residents are elected. We recently held an election, and so your current team is made up of:

- Greg Anderson, Landport
- Mandy Buxey, Paulsgrove
- Mary Bailey, Portsea

It's worth remembering that before each meeting, you have the chance to give feedback on whatever that meeting is about. We then make sure your voice is represented at the meeting. So please reach out to the resident engagement team if you want to start giving your views – it's well worth it.

For more info or to put your name forward for future elections, email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call **023 9283 4835**.

HAVE
YOUR
SAY

£250

YOU COULD WIN

**1 chance
to win £250,
5 more to
win £50!**

£50

Scan the code to
take the survey



£50

Your views matter.

**Tell us what you think of
the homes and services we
provide as your landlord.**

- Survey closes
31 December 2024.
- Winner drawn
15 January 2025.

📱 Complete the survey
at portsmouth.gov.uk
and search 'housing'

☎ For help, or to complete
the survey over the
phone on **023 9261 6708**

Let's have a Cracking Christmas!

Make a Christmas Cracker Decoration

Hi, we're the arts and crafts group from the Resident Participation Centre.
We wanted to share this fun crafty activity with you – enjoy!

What you'll need

- An empty crisp tube
- Crepe paper in a colour of your choice
- Ribbon or twine
- Double-sided tape
- PVA glue
- Scissors
- A craft or Stanley knife
- Christmassy decorations like holly, baubles, or ribbon



1. Carefully cut the bottom off your crisp tube, and then cut the tube in half. Discard the lid.
2. Take one half and cut in half again – you should have three parts now, as shown in the photo.
3. Lay the tubes on a large bit of crepe paper, like in the photo, and place some tape along the top of the paper.
4. Roll up the tubes in the crepe paper, keeping their positions, and seal with the tape.
5. To create your cracker shape, use ribbon or twine to tie the gaps between the tubes.
6. Paste some PVA glue on the inside of the tubes at each end of your cracker and carefully fold in the crepe paper to finish.
7. Decorate your cracker with ribbons or any Christmas decorations of your choice!

We hope you enjoy making these crackers.

📷 Make sure to take a photo of yours and send it to @HouseTalk on Facebook!

You should also come along to the Resident Participation Centre to join in the craft fun!

Call **023 9283 4835** or visit **37 Sharps Rd, Havant, Hants, PO9 5QJ** to find out more.

Let's get social this winter

Here's a whole host of low-cost events and activities to get stuck into this winter.

Portsmouth

Christmas lights switch on – Portsmouth Lights Up Christmas

📅 21 – 23 November

📍 rediscoverportsmouth.co.uk

Three days of sparkling events that include Christmas Lights Switch On Parties, Carols and the We Shine Art and Light Festival where key locations will be transformed into a night-time gallery. With stars from panto, Portsmouth FC heroes, community choirs and Father Christmas making a special visit, expect surprises and a dazzling finale.



Portsmouth Christmas Market

📅 22 November – 30 December, all day

📍 Commercial Road, City Centre

Enjoy the annual Christmas shopping, German sausages, glühwein, festive treats, Christmas stockings and tree decorations!

Hotwalls Christmas Market

📅 30 November – 1 December, 10am – 4pm

📍 Hotwalls Studios, Old Portsmouth

Hotwalls Studios hosts a festive weekend featuring open artist studios and a 40-stall market. Enjoy local art, crafts, live music, mulled wine, and refreshments at The Canteen.



Eastney Beach Clean

📅 7 December, 10am

📍 The Coffee Cup, PO4 9GE

With it being the season of giving, why not lend a hand cleaning up Eastney Beach with Southsea Beachwatch? Equipment is provided, and it's a great way to meet new people while giving back to your community.

Love Southsea Market

📅 7, 8, 14 and 15 December, 10am – 4pm

📍 Palmerston Road

The Love Southsea Markets are back again and have been supporting the local community in bringing you local makers, artists, creators and traders since 2008!

Festival of Christmas

📅 7 – 8 December, all day

📍 Port Solent

Explore more than 100 market stalls whilst enjoying live music from local bands and choirs, street entertainment and delicious food and drink.

Hampshire's Farmers' Market

📅 15 December, 10am – 2pm

📍 Palmerston Road

Hampshire Farmers' Markets brings beautiful, fresh local produce to Portsmouth and Southsea every month.

Hotwalls Open Studios

📅 **15 December, 11am – 4pm**
📍 **Hotwalls Studios, Old Portsmouth**

All 13 studios will open their doors for the public to chat, watch and buy. Find demonstrations and possible drop-in sessions throughout the studios, as well as a guest artist in the Historic Round Tower.

Gosport

Family Food, Fun and Fitness

📅 **10 December, 1.30 – 3pm**
📍 **Bridgemary Library, Gosport**
📖 Book at hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk

This free session aims to work with you to gain the confidence to start cooking from scratch and making mealtimes a real family activity.

Santa's in the Park

📅 **22 December, 1 – 3pm**
📍 **Leesland Park, Gosport**

Free entry to see Santa with a free gift for all children attending!

Havant, Leigh Park and Waterlooville

Multi-sports Club

📅 **4, 11 and 18 December, 5 – 6 pm**
📍 **Waterlooville Community Centre**
📖 Book at getupandgohavant.com

Friendly and informal sports sessions for everyone, regardless of ability! Children under 16 must be with an adult.

Family Food, Fun and Fitness

📅 **10 December, 9.30 – 11am**
📍 **Horizon Havant, Civic Centre Road**
📖 Book at hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk

This face-to-face session aims to work with you to make mealtimes a real family activity.

Saturday Club

📅 **Every Saturday 10am – 12pm**
📍 **Havant Library**

Drop by the library to enjoy playing various games as well as colouring for children and adults.

Saturday Family Fun

📅 **Every Saturday 10am – 12pm**
📍 **Leigh Park Library**

Families – have fun and be creative with craft, construction or traditional board games – something different each week!

Rhymetime

📅 **Every Friday 10 – 10.30am**
📍 **Leigh Park Library**

Join us for action songs and rhymes for very young children and their parent/carers.

Christmas Fayre

📅 **Date: 30 November, 11am – 3pm**
📍 **Beacon Lounge, Havant**

Get into the festive spirit with the local community at the Beacon Lounge in Havant – and all for a great cause.

Christmas Family Fun Day

📅 **8 December, 12 – 3pm**
📍 **The Clanfield Centre, PO8 0YF**
📖 Santa's grotto must be pre-booked by calling **023 9421 1650**

Santa's Grotto, local dance and singing groups, games and activities, face painting, and amazing food!

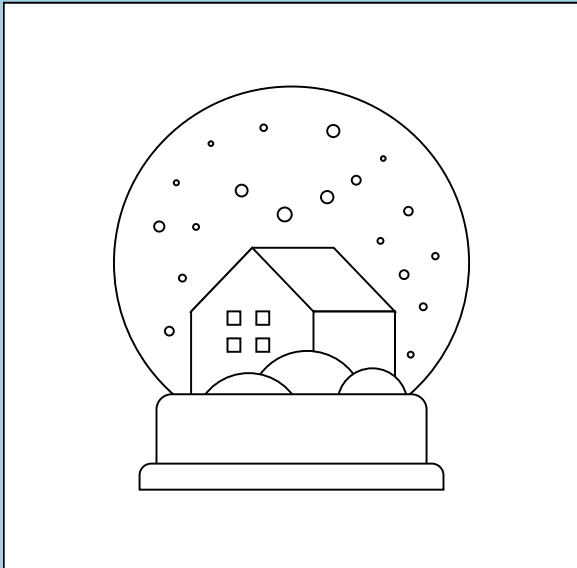
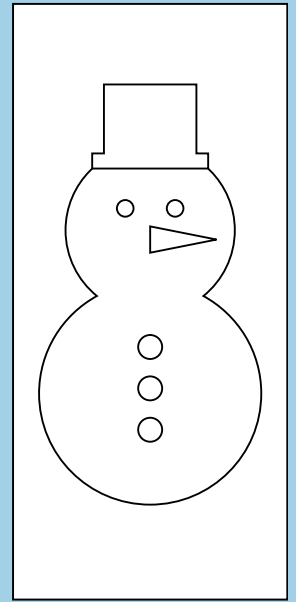
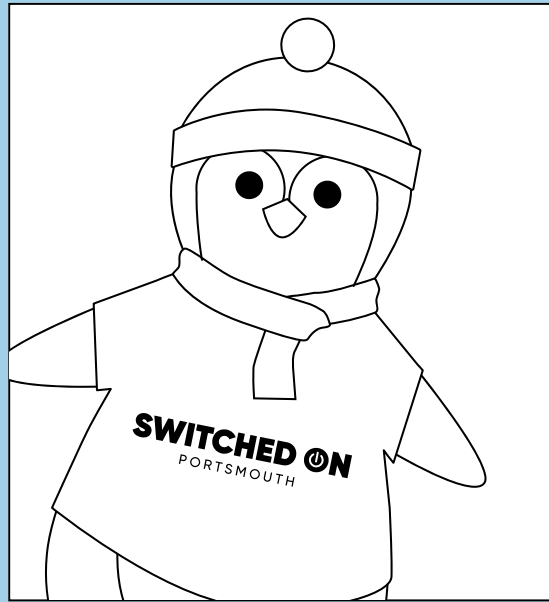
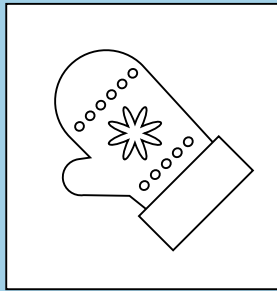
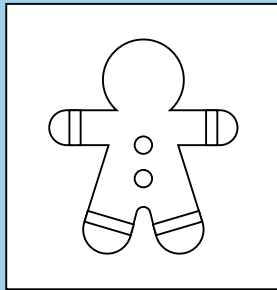
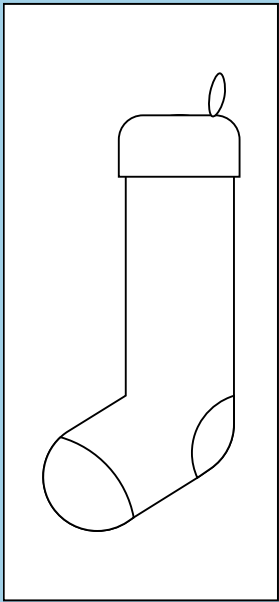
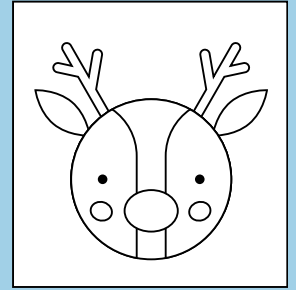
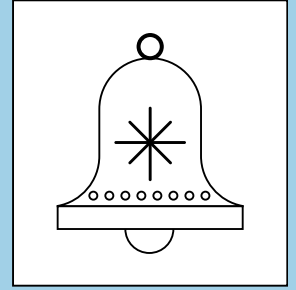
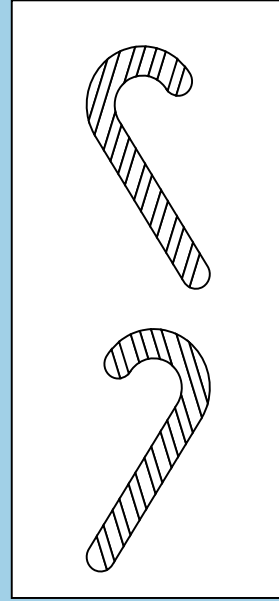
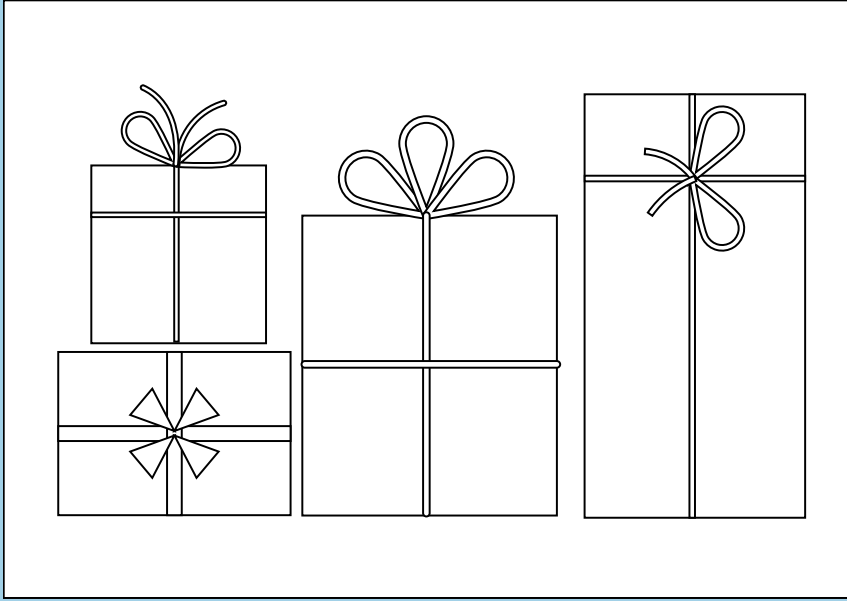


Christmas Market

📅 **30 November, 10am – 2pm**
📍 **Leigh Park Community Centre**
💰 **£6 for Santa's Grotto**
📧 Santa's Grotto must be pre-booked by emailing office@LPCCWestbury.org.uk

Festive fun, family activities, Christmas market stalls of arts, crafts and tasty food.

LET'S COLOUR!



GLOVES



SCARF

**TICK
THE BOX
WHEN YOU
FIND ONE!**

WOOLLY
HAT



HOT CHOCOLATE

LET'S FIND!

**How many of these
items can you find this
winter?**

BIRD



ACORN



CANDLE

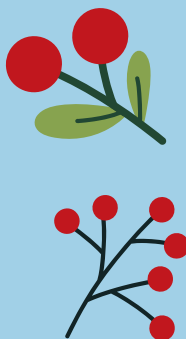


FROST

SQUIRREL



WINTER
BERRIES



TREE STUMP





FREE food, activities and trips for eligible 5-16 year olds

📍 FamilyLifePompey ✉ HAF@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

To book go to **pycportsmouth.co.uk/haffunpompey**

Portsmouth's youth shine bright at festival

On 21-23 November, youth clubs in Somerstown, Charles Dickens, Portsea, Paulsgrove, and Stamshaw will have transformed into glowing art galleries. It's thanks to We Shine Portsmouth - an annual showcase of our city's young talent.

What happened? Young artists aged 11-19 created stunning works using light and augmented reality - very modern, and very cool. This Arts Council England funded project, delivered by Foursandeights, not only wowed visitors but also equipped the youth club members with new creative skills.

Missed it? Visit **weshineportsmouth.co.uk** for more info or to check for future events.



A creative showcase from We Shine Portsmouth from 2022



Teen takeover

art edition

Young people's review of this year's LOOK UP festival artwork.

We asked Brook and BYAC Youth Club members to give us their honest reviews of some of the new street art murals brought to our city during LOOK UP festival in September.

- ★ **"I think it looks good because they're different and there's nothing the same"** *BYAC youth club member*
- ★ **"I like the art around the city. It makes it look less messy"** *Chloe, aged 16*
- ★ **"I like the rabbit because it's fluffy and has piercing blue eyes and a picturesque background"** *Billy, aged 16*
- ★ **"All the art is so colourful; I wish I could do it!"** *Kizzy, aged 18*

Find out more about our youth clubs at [PYC.com/youth](https://www.pyc.com/youth)

Summer photo challenge winner Rosie

Aged 11 from Gosport

Rosie took this photo of one of many amazing sunsets we had this summer. We love it – well done and thanks for sending it in Rosie!



"I love the pig picture, it's so colourful and detailed"
Archie, aged 13



"I like the pig – it's funny"
Lily, aged 18



Making a change to your home?

Be asbestos aware



Asbestos in your home is not dangerous unless it becomes damaged or disturbed. Your home may contain asbestos, which is why it's important not to make any changes without telling us first.

This includes any changes that could affect:

- Insulation boards
- Gutters, rainwater pipes, water tanks, garages or shed roofing sheets
- Textured coatings, such as ceiling finishes
- Floor tiles and textiles
- Sprayed coatings on ceilings, walls and beams for fire protection

Before making changes to your home, you must request an 'asbestos in your home' report from us using the contact details below. This will make sure you don't uncover asbestos during those changes.

What if I've already made changes?

If you've possibly damaged areas of asbestos, you must let us know ASAP using the contact details below.

I think there's already disturbed or damaged asbestos in my home - what should I do?

Contact us using the details below, and do not try to repair or remove any asbestos materials yourself.

☎ 023 9284 1311

✉ repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Home surveys: what you need to know

We're currently carrying out stock condition surveys and tenancy update visits on your homes. We'll try covering both in one visit at a time that suits you, but we understand you might have concerns.

What to expect:

- A quick check of your home
- A chat about your current circumstances
- Information on how we can support you

These visits are a legal requirement, and they're important as they help us ensure your home suits your needs whilst planning future improvements.

Arranging a visit

You can either wait for us to contact you, or you can arrange a time with us now through your housing office or by emailing AMS@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

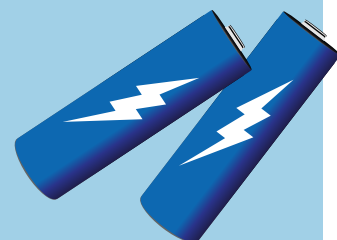
Battery fires

Know how to prevent them

Not properly charging or storing devices with lithium-ion batteries properly can cause fires, so it's important you know how to stay safe. You can tell if a device has lithium-ion batteries by reading the manual or finding the symbol Li on it.

Common items that use them include:

- E-scooters or e-bikes
- Mobility scooters
- Toothbrushes
- Air fryers
- Vaping devices



When charging a device with lithium-ion batteries:

- ✗ Do not store or charge in communal areas (especially mobility scooters, e-scooters or e-bikes)
- ✗ Do not overload sockets or plug extension leads into each other
- ✗ Do not cover when charging
- ✗ Do not charge when sleeping or not home

📱 Know how to stay safe, visit portsmouth.gov.uk/hantsbatteryafety

Stay ahead of damp and mould this winter

Mould, which is more common in winter, grows in damp conditions – especially on damp surfaces and in areas which produce more condensation in homes.

Five ways to prevent mould in your home:



1

Get ahead by knowing if you have it - check for dark spots or patches in the corners and borders in your home.



2

Ventilate rooms by turning on extractor fans or opening windows slightly when cooking, showering, and drying clothes.



3

Tell us if you have a faulty extractor fan or windows that leak using the contact details below.



4

Pull furniture away from walls to stop it spreading to sofas and wardrobes.



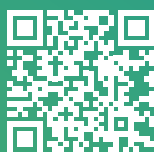
5

Try to keep your home between 18-21°C.

If you spot any signs of **black mould** (even a small amount) you should report it to us ASAP on **023 9284 1311** or via email **repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

You can treat small areas of mould around windows with shop-bought mildew cleaner, but if the issue returns, you should contact us using the details above.

Visit **portsmouth.gov.uk/mouldsupport** or scan the QR code to watch our useful video on how to deal with mould.



Struggling to heat your home this year?

You can contact the Switched On Portsmouth team. They offer free advice and support for energy bills and can refer you to government schemes that install free energy saving measures such as solar panels, LED light bulbs and insulation.

Contact the team on their freephone or email:

📞 **0800 260 5907**

✉️ **hello@switchedonportsmouth.co.uk**

Outside of Portsmouth? Find your relevant service at **portsmouth.gov.uk/energysaving-hants**



**HAVE
YOUR
SAY**

Another
chance to
WIN
£250

Don't despair, report your repair!

Important advice

We're aware of companies working across our homes encouraging people to make claims for repairs, but we advise you don't use a solicitor to settle any issues with repairs. It's much better and quicker to speak to us directly.

That's because claims companies usually try to earn more than you may recover in the process, meaning you won't see much money from a claim. Our funding comes from your rents, so when we have to pay for claims, it reduces the money available for repairing and improving your homes.

What if I'm not happy with the repair you've made?

If you've got any issues or questions, contact us using the details below and we'll do our best to sort it. Or if you want to make a formal complaint, you can do so online (where you'll also find our full complaints process and other help) at portsmouth.gov.uk/housingcomplaint or by calling **023 9260 6383**.

What happens after?

We'll arrange a time with you for one of our surveyors to come and assess or carry out the work (remember - you'll need to give us access to your home so we can sort the repair).

If you need us to investigate a repair issue, tell us:

-  portsmouth.gov.uk/requestarepair
-  **023 9284 1311**
-  repairsupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
-  Or contact your housing office.



We want your feedback on repairs!

Our repairs and gas contracts end in March 2026.

Because of this, we've started reviewing how we currently deliver these services, and we want your input on how they could look in the future.

We've created a quick and easy survey, and we'd really appreciate you taking five minutes to tell us what's important to you when it comes to your repairs and gas services.

To help shape the future of these services:

-  Scan the QR code or visit research.net/r/RepairsService2024
-  Or call **023 9284 1311**
-  The closing date for the survey is **midnight on 15 December 2024**
-  As a thank you we're holding a prize draw for one of you to **win a £250 gift voucher!**

Scan the
QR code to
complete the
survey →



Make Christmas greener

As the festive season approaches, we're asking you to help keep our estates clean and safe by properly disposing of holiday waste. With Christmas buys often leading to bulkier items, it's crucial to plan ahead and avoid fly-tipping, which causes fire risks and hurts our community's appearance.

If you're unsure which bin to use, below is a little guide for common items. But remember to take advantage of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC)! It's an easy way to get rid of extra waste which stops the fire and health risks caused by overflowing bins.



Recycling bin

- Cardboard boxes
- Greetings cards (remove ribbons, batteries, and sections with glitter)
- Empty chocolate and sweets tins
- Plain wrapping paper



Rubbish bin

- Wrapping paper containing plastic, shiny patterns or glitter
- Tinsel and baubles



HWRC*

- Broken Christmas lights



Plastic banks in Portsmouth or rubbish bin

- Empty plastic tubs for sweets and chocolates



For **batteries**, put them in a clear plastic bag on top of your black wheeled bin. Or if you have communal bins, take them to local shops or the HWRC.

**Portsmouth residents with their own individual bins can put small electrical items in a bag and place it on top of their recycling bin.*

Remember, your home recycling bin can take paper, cardboard, plastic bottles (no other plastics), tins/cans and aerosols.

by recycling right!



Real Christmas trees

You must leave your tree on the pavement as it will not be collected, and we will investigate any fly-tipping of trees on estates.

Instead, why not consider recycling them to be used as chippings for local parks? Cut them up and put them in your garden waste bin or take them to the HWRC where you can dispose of it for free (just remember to book a slot before visiting).

To report fly-tipping or cleaning/communal area issues, call us on **023 9268 8444** or visit **portsmouth.gov.uk/estateservices**

Cut food waste, boost holiday cheer!

This festive season, cut food waste and save money with these five easy tips:

- 1** Plan your menu and create a shopping list to avoid overbuying
- 2** Serve modest portions to guests to prevent excess waste
- 3** Store leftovers in airtight containers and turn them into new meals
- 4** Freeze leftover or unused food to extend its life
- 5** Put your unusable leftovers in your food waste caddy/bin



MONEY ADVICE

Knowing what help is available is the first step to making your cost of living more manageable. Here's the latest updates and support for you to know:

Do you pay tax on your pension?

You pay tax if your total annual income adds up to more than your Personal Allowance. For 2024/25, that means you pay tax if your income is over £12,570*.



In 2024/25, the standard tax-free personal allowance is £12,570, and the maximum new state pension is £11,502.40. This means you will have £1,067.60 of your personal allowance left before you must pay tax.

If you have to pay tax, this will usually be collected through any personal or workplace pension you might have (not your state pension). If you're still working, it will be deducted from your wages.

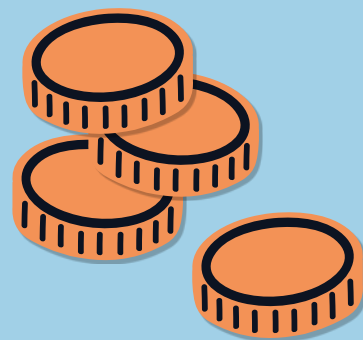
If it's not possible to collect tax you owe via other income, you may:

- Have to fill in a tax assessment, or
- Receive a bill called a simple assessment

HMRC bases the assessment on information that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), employers, and other organisations (such as banks), provide to them. It's important to check the figures on the simple assessment calculation carefully.

Find lots more useful information online at moneyhelper.org.uk or you can call your housing office if you'd like more help understanding what to do.

**This total includes your State Pension but excludes disability benefits such as Attendance Allowance.*



Pension Credit and the Winter Fuel Payment

Thousands of pensioners could be entitled to pension credit, but haven't applied. If that's you, you could be missing out on up to £3,900 per year – around £300 per month. That extra money could make a big difference this winter.

If you haven't applied yet, we're here to help. Our friendly cost of living advisors can chat with you to see if you qualify, and even assist with the application.

Pension credit also unlocks the winter fuel payment, worth £200-£300. But you need to apply by 21 December to get it this year.

Get support by calling us on our cost of living helpline, **023 9284 1047**. We're open weekdays, 9am–5pm (closes 4.30pm Fridays).

Other help available this Winter



1 Warm Home Discount Scheme (WHD)

WHD of £140 for people on a low income.

It's an automatic payment that should be paid between October 2024 and March 2025.

2 Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance for people over the pension age with extra needs.

Find the application form online or call the helpline:

 gov.uk/attendance-allowance

 0800 731 0122

3 Guaranteed Pension Credit and Savings Pension Credit

The amount you receive depends on your circumstance and income. For more information, call your housing office or visit:

 gov.uk/pension-credit

4 Switched On Portsmouth

For help reducing energy bills and advice, visit or call Switched On Portsmouth:

 switchedonportsmouth.co.uk

 0800 260 5907

The team can refer you to energy saving schemes directly and offer free advice.

5 Married Couples' allowance

If you're in a couple and one of you is under pension age, you may be entitled to:

- Marriage Allowance or Married Couples' Allowance (could reduce your tax bill)
- Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit (if you're on a lower income)

For more information, call your housing office or visit:

 gov.uk/married-couples-allowance

6 Cost of living support

Your one-stop guide to the help available if you're struggling to make ends meet.

All the information is online or you can call the helpline on:

 portsmouth.gov.uk/costofliving

 023 9284 1047

If you're outside of Portsmouth, search '**cost of living**' on your council's website, or check out Citizen's Advice at:

 citizensadvice.org.uk/costofliving

 0800 144 8848

If you're unsure if you may be eligible to claim anything we've mentioned on these pages, please book an appointment to speak to your housing officer.

Gambling: when fun becomes a problem



Gambling can be harmless entertainment, but for some, it becomes a serious issue.

Signs of problem gambling include:

- Uncontrollable urges to gamble
- Spending more than intended
- Secrecy about gambling habits
- Financial struggles due to gambling

Problem gambling can severely impact mental health, leading to stress, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.

If you're concerned about your gambling habits, take the first step and reach out for help:

- **GamCare**
📄 gamcare.org.uk
☎ 0808 8020 133
- **Gamblers Anonymous**
📄 gamblersanonymous.org.uk
☎ 0330 094 0322
- **CALM**
📄 thecalmzone.net/guides/gambling
- **GambleAware**
📄 gambleaware.org
☎ 0808 8020 133
- **Your GP**
- **For immediate help, call Samaritans on**
☎ 116 123 anytime.

Pet policy

We're a nation that loves our pets, and we want your views on pets in your homes.

**HAVE
YOUR
SAY**

We want to review our pet policy to make sure it reflects your views. The government is currently reviewing legislation which could mean you have more right to request a pet soon. Because of this, we thought this was the paw-fect time to ask your opinion!

We're keen to understand your view towards pets in your homes, blocks and estates, and what our new pet policy should say.

To help you give feedback, we've created a short survey which you can take by scanning the QR code below with your smartphone. Or you can head straight to **research.net/r/PetPolicy24**

If you need the survey in paper form, or want to complete it over the phone, contact us on **housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk** or call **023 9283 4835**.

The survey will be open until **midnight on 31 January 2024**.



Your right to contact the Housing Ombudsman

If you have a complaint about us as your landlord, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman for help.

They offer impartial advice at any time and can investigate complaints if you're unhappy with our complaint investigation outcome or how we handled it. For example, they recently investigated our handling of three complaints and found we dealt with two of them incorrectly, which we've since taken steps to improve on.

📄 All their findings are made public. To find ours just search for '**Portsmouth City Council**' at **housing-ombudsman.org.uk/decisions**

📄 Learn more at **portsmouth.gov.uk/housingcomplaints**

☎ or call the Housing Ombudsman directly on **030 0111 3000**



Somerstown Hub's

best ever Mac 'n' Cheese recipe

This issue we're bringing you a recipe straight from the culinary geniuses at Somerstown Hub's Café (pictured above). It's been mastered by Café chef Brendan (pictured on the right), and it's cheesy, warming, and 10/10 tasty.

 **Serves 4**

 **Time: 40 mins**

 **Skill level: Easy**

What you'll need

- **500g macaroni pasta**
(125g per person)
- **125g butter**
- **125g plain flour**
- **300ml whole milk**
- **500g extra mature cheddar cheese**
- **Two red peppers**
- **One large white onion**

What you need to do

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C or gas mark 4.
2. Bring a pot of water to the boil, place the macaroni in, and reduce the heat to a simmer until the pasta is soft. When done, drain the macaroni and leave to one side to cool.
3. Melt the butter in a saucepan and then add the flour, mixing together until combined.
4. Add the milk slowly, mixing continuously, until the sauce starts to thicken.
5. Mix in 450g of the cheese until the sauce is nice and creamy and then turn off the heat.
6. Slice the red peppers and onion and fry them in a pan on low-medium heat until softened (you can use vegetable or olive oil).
7. Add the cooked macaroni, peppers and onion into the cheese sauce and combine together.
8. Transfer the mixture into an ovenproof dish and sprinkle atop the remaining 50g cheese.
9. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden brown on top and bubbling around the edges.
10. Enjoy! We love it served with garlic bread, but it's more than satisfying on its own!

Pop by the café!

We're on the first floor of the Somerstown Hub, and we're a warm, welcoming and friendly community café offering tasty hot food, fresh baguettes, cakes, drinks and much more. We can also provide top notch catering for your next function! Visit pypcportsmouth.co.uk/community/hub-cafe for more info.

WIN a heated blanket

Parker the Penguin's winter competition!

Ready for a fun challenge with a chance to win? Here's how to take part:

Find the hidden answers in the wordsearch below and send a photo of your completed wordsearch to **@HouseTalk** or **@SwitchedOnPortsmouth** on **Facebook** or email **hello@switchedonportsmouth.co.uk** before **Friday 13 December**. Correct answers will enter you into our exciting prize draw!

Can you find the answers to these questions in the wordsearch below?

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

Hint!

It's an elephant, and we featured him in our summer issue!

Question 1

What is the name of Switched On Portsmouth's summer mascot?

Question 2

How many minutes should an average shower be to save water?

Question 3

What type of panels can you get installed on your roof that converts sun into energy?

Fun facts

- ✳ Standard shower heads use about 11.3 litres of water per minute. If you shaved one minute off your daily shower, you could save more than 4,000 litres of water per year. And if every Brit did that, it would save billions (yes, billions) of litres of water per year.
- ✳ You may be eligible to get free solar panels under the Warmer Homes Scheme! To find out more, visit warmerhomes.org.uk

T&Cs: One submission per person. Winner must be aged 18 or over and be a Portsmouth City Council tenant or leaseholder. Submissions are anonymous, and we'll contact the winner via Facebook messenger on Monday 16 December.