

house talk

Spring 2025 • The exclusive magazine for Portsmouth Homes tenants and leaseholders



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**Portsmouth
Homes**



**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/yourportsmouthhomes

Competitions

Competitions in House Talk are open only to residents who live in a Portsmouth Homes property. They aren't open to Portsmouth City Council employees. One entry per household.

Recycle

House Talk is printed on 100% recycled paper using vegetable inks. Please recycle this magazine.

Leaseholder services

Paulsgrove & Wecock Farm.....	023 9283 4561
Buckland, Landport & Portsea	023 9283 4845
City South	023 9284 1486
Leigh Park	023 9284 1741

Housing offices

Buckland.....	023 9260 6500
Somerstown.....	023 9260 6300
Landport.....	023 9260 6400
Leigh Park	023 9230 6900
Paulsgrove	023 9260 6030
Portsea	023 9260 6200
Wecock Farm	023 9260 6100
Out of hours	023 9282 4244

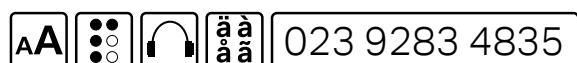
Know anyone who needs this in a different language?

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/কল: 023 9283 4835



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

Hello

A message from Sally Scattergood, *assistant director of housing*

In April 2024, the government introduced new rules for social housing. These rules require landlords to show they're meeting the standards and providing good services to tenants.

We told you in the Winter issue of House Talk that we self-referred to the regulator in September 2024 about the areas we need to improve. This was seen by the regulator as a good step, showing we're open and willing to meet the requirements set down.

The Regulator of Social Housing met with us and agreed there were areas for improvement and issued an official regulatory judgement. You can read it on their website.

The judgement relates to our stock condition surveys, electrical safety, fire safety actions, and emergency repairs. We know about these issues and have an ongoing plan, which

includes increased inspections, better record-keeping, and continued prioritisation of fire safety actions.

You have told us that you're mostly happy with the way we deliver our services to you. We're committed to improving your services and working closely with you to meet your needs.

We do have to balance increased costs and resources to respond to the changes, and this will take time.

If you have any concerns about your home or suggestions for how we can improve, make sure to tell us via your housing office (page 2) so we can investigate and respond.

Yours sincerely,

Sally



Home safety checks

Why it's important to let us in



Book yours now

Your annual gas safety check

We're required by law to carry out gas safety checks in your homes once a year. It's vital you allow our engineers into your home to check your gas appliances to help keep you safe.

Who does the checks?

Our Liberty Gas engineers.

Will they show up without warning?

No - you can either schedule an appointment yourself using the contact info below or wait for Liberty Gas to call you. Need to reschedule? Simply contact Liberty Gas directly.

Arrange your next gas appointment now:

 [liberty-group.co.uk/
contact](mailto:liberty-group.co.uk/contact)

 023 9241 4700

When we ask to come into your home, it's to do important safety checks that the law requires. We only come in to make sure your home is safe, so all we ask is you let us in at the time we've arranged with you. We'll never turn up unannounced.

What checks will you need access to my home for?

We need to carry out checks for the following:

- Gas servicing
- Fire safety
- Stock condition (or asset management) surveys
- Smoke alarms
- Carbon monoxide detectors (where a gas boiler or fire is present)
- Electrical tests

Who carries out these checks?

Our building surveyors and contractors.

They'll always introduce themselves and will be wearing a name badge and photo ID.

-  We understand your time is valuable which is why we aim to complete these at a time that suits you.

-  **Thank you for your cooperation** - it plays an important role in maintaining a safe and secure community for everyone.

Your voice matters: *How you're helping us improve*

Keeping pets in your homes

The government is reviewing laws that may soon give you more rights to keep pets in your home. Because of this, we've been looking at our own pet policy and recently ran a survey to get your views on keeping pets in your homes, blocks and estates.

Over 550 of you took the survey and shared your views so a big thank you! And following your feedback, we've since held focus groups and staff surveys to get even more views.

What happens now?

We're working through all your feedback from the survey and workshops to draft a new policy and pet agreement - all informed by your views. You'll see an update in the next issue (July 2025).



Are you updating any other policies?

As well as reviewing and updating existing Portsmouth Homes* policies, here's a list of policies we'll be looking at over the next few months. We'll ask for your views on them, so be sure to join an upcoming focus group (page 10).

- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Communication and reasonable adjustment
- Managing unreasonable behaviour
- Neighbourhood management
- Compliance
- Repairs
- Gas and electric safety
- Lift safety
- Mobility scooter storage
- Void management

*Portsmouth Homes is what we call our landlord services when we're talking to you, our tenants.

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

Updating your repairs service

Our current repairs and gas contracts with Mountjoy, Comserv and Liberty end in March 2026.

Because of this, we've been looking at how we deliver these services to you and recently ran a survey asking for your thoughts on the changes we're making. Thank you for sharing your views! Your feedback will play an important role in shaping our policies and services.

What you said:



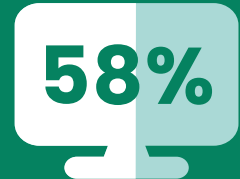
87%

of you prefer getting appointment updates by text



57%

of you prefer reporting repairs via telephone but would be willing to use an app



58%

of you prefer to give feedback on repairs via an online survey



75%

of you say the best time for us to carry out repairs is between 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday



83%

of you think getting an appointment for a non-emergency repair within 28 days is an acceptable timeframe

You told us your top three service priorities are:



Fire safety improvements



Improvements to fix damp and mould



Energy efficiency improvements

What happens now?

We'll continue to review and use your feedback as we update our policies and services, all of which you can find at **portsmouth.gov.uk/repairsfeedback**

PS. There was a £250 gift voucher up for grabs for those who took the survey. The winner, chosen at random, was...Ed! Congrats!

Keep an eye out for future surveys for your chance to win a voucher.



Your rent update: From 1 April...

Rent

- **Your rent will increase by 2.7%**

We won't increase any rents above the local housing allowance rate. So if you get housing related benefits and your personal circumstances haven't changed, your rent increase will be covered.

General Service Charges

- **£7.14 pw for houses and bungalows** (£0.14 decrease to the 2024/25 rate)
- **£21.07 pw for flats, bedsits and maisonettes** (£1.47 increase)

Sheltered Housing Charges

- **£20.51 pw for tenants in category 1** (£1.16 increase)
- **£66.92 pw for tenants in category 2** (£3.52 increase)
- **£122.50 pw for tenants in category 2.5** (£9.57 increase)

Garages and parking

- **Your charges will increase by 1.7%**

Laundry

Your laundry token charges will stay the same:

- £3 for the washing machine
- £2 for the tumble dryer

Heating

- **5.4% reduction in the Edgbaston and Tipton blocks**
- **2.8% reduction in the sheltered blocks**
- **2.9% reduction in the Dickens blocks**

How was all of this decided?

Each year we, consult with you when setting rents and other charges.

- **In December 2024** we sent you a letter, put an article in House Talk, and invited you to tenant and leaseholder meetings. All of this was to get your feedback on the new rent proposals.
- **At the end of January 2025**, we gave Cllr Darren Sanders, the cabinet member for housing and tackling homelessness, a report which included all of your feedback. He used this to help set the new rents and charges.

So, thank you to everyone who shared their views - it's the most feedback we've ever received!

What happens next?

You should've received your formal notice letter in Feb which explained everything, and the new charges will have applied from 1 April 2025.



If you're struggling to pay your rent, get in touch with your housing officer (page 2) who can help. For support on lowering your gas and electric costs, call Switched on Portsmouth on **0800 260 5907** or visit **www.switchedonportsmouth.co.uk**

You can also search 'cost of living' on our (or your local council's if you're outside of Portsmouth) website to find more support.

You said, we did

You've been busy sharing your ideas for how we can improve - and we listened. Here's some of the things we've changed in response to what you've said in focus groups, meetings and surveys...



You said:

"We get too many calls and letters"

So we created a monthly calendar with a covering letter and an opt-in for calls.

You said:

"We want more estate walkabouts"

So we increased the number of sessions to 14 in 2024, with 14 more in total for 2025.

You said:

"Pickwick House's floor needs attention"

So we got a brand-new machine to give the floors a deep clean.

You said:

"We want to be more involved and have a say"

So we set up a new resident scrutiny group.

You said:

"We want to visit Comserv and Mountjoy's HQ to learn more about them"

So we organised a group visit to their HQ.

You said:

"We want more ways to get involved"

From helping us with everything from pet policies to estate walkabouts, you have loads of options, virtually or face to face.

Let's celebrate more survey prize winners!

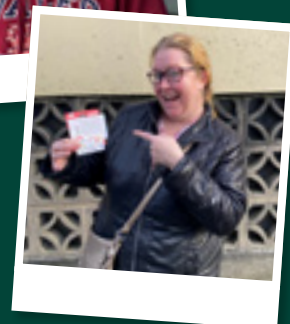
Thank you to everyone who completed our Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSM)!

Your answers will help our services improve and work better for you. Let's take a look at who won the prizes in our survey competition!

Drum roll please...

Victoria was victorious and won the £250 jackpot!

And not forgetting a big congrats to our five £50 voucher winners... Ian, Brett, Janice, Sarah and Nicola!



Learning from your complaints

At Portsmouth Homes, we believe in being open about the complaints we get and how we're working to make things better. Here's some recent examples:

Delayed fence repairs

What happened

A resident complained about long delays in repairing damaged fence panels at their home.

How we responded

Though bad weather had caused a backlog of fence repairs, we reviewed the tenant's situation and agreed they should be prioritised. We brought forward the repair date, which resolved the complaint.

What we learned

While weather can cause delays, we need to consider each household's specific needs when prioritising repairs.

Anti-social behaviour in communal gardens

What happened

A tenant reported problems with children playing football and causing disturbance in a communal garden.

How we responded

We increased community warden patrols in the area and our play workers engaged with the children to explore other local play opportunities.

What we learned

Sometimes, redirecting activities rather than just stopping them creates better outcomes for everyone.

Concerns about staff conduct

What happened

A tenant complained about inaction from a housing office regarding their reports of anti-social behaviour.

How we responded

We took this feedback seriously and highlighted with all our housing offices how important it is for you to feel comfortable discussing issues with us.

Want to make a complaint?

Visit portsmouth.gov.uk/housingcomplaints or call **023 9260 6383**. Whether you live in or out of the city, if you're a Portsmouth Homes tenant, you can make a complaint to us.

Your questions answered by Mountjoy

Question: Who's responsible for sub-contractors' work?

The main repair company is fully responsible for any workers they hire and the quality of their work.

Question: When do repairs happen versus replacements?

We fix the things which Portsmouth Homes is responsible for in your home. If something is too expensive or impossible to repair, we'll replace it instead.

Question: Do failed jobs cost the council money? Eg. the cost of putting up scaffolding multiple times to fix the same issue.

If contractors make mistakes to a repair that increase costs, they must refund that money to the council's landlord service.

Question: What should I do if I'm having issues getting my repair sorted?

You should contact Portsmouth Homes' repairs support team on **023 9284 1311** or email repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

You can also contact your housing office or find info in the article above on how to make a complaint. Want to be one of the residents asking questions like this in the future? Let our resident engagement team help you get involved: contact **023 9283 4835** or housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

More ways to get involved



Consortiums (meetings)

We host consortiums at Somerstown Hub to give you all an update on something specific, usually followed by an informal Q&A.

Here's your upcoming dates to join:

- **Thursday 1 May, 6-8pm** (room 3 of the Hub)
Topics: Our latest quarterly performance, tenant satisfaction measures, and resident engagement service
- **Thursday 5 June, 11am-1pm** (room 4 of the Hub)
Topic: Our buildings

PS. Bring this voucher with you to any consortium to be grab a free hot drink at the Hub Café!

Free drink voucher

When you attend a resident consortium.
Get it signed by a member of the resident engagement team on arrival and get your free hot drink!

Signed:

Focus groups

We're looking for your honest feedback in some upcoming focus groups at the Somerstown Hub.

The groups are friendly, informal, and offer you free tea and biscuits! We'll also help you with travel to the Hub if needed.

Specifically, we want you to join us to talk about...

- **Policies** on 22 May and 10 July
- **Estate services** on 29 May

Shaping the Future workshops

With budgets tight and services changing, we introduced an interactive workshop to help shape the future of housing services.

We've only held one so far, but the feedback was so great that we want to hold more. All you have to do is let us know if you'd be interested using the details on the right.

And remember - we can support with translation, transport, and can offer workshops online or outside of standard working hours.

Estate walkabouts

 Wheelchair accessible

Join our upcoming estate walkabouts to meet your estate wardens (and guests) and share what you love or any issues in your area.

No need to register - just show up! Accessible for everyone, including those using wheelchairs or walking sticks. If you have mobility concerns, contact us using the details below.

Buckland

- 15 May
- 25 September

Landport

- 27 May
- 23 September

Leigh Park

- 3 June
- 21 October

Paulsgrove

- 24 June
- 30 September

Portsea

- 21 May
- 9 October

Wecock

- 20 May
- 2 October

Somerstown

- 4 June
- 8 October



Interested in taking part in any of these?

Call or email us now:

 **housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

 **023 9283 4835**

South coast training



What actually is it?

Ever wondered what happens when you attend one of those South Coast Training events we invite you to? Let us fill you in!

Twice a year, in April and October, housing providers across the south coast team up to offer these special training days in Southampton (we provide travel for you).

What the day looks like:

- Welcome with refreshments at 9.30am
- Morning workshop on communication and confident speaking
- Free lunch provided
- Afternoon session on handling complaints effectively
- Final refreshments and a raffle around 4pm

Who else will be there?

You'll meet tenants from the likes of Southampton, Winchester, Fareham, and Bournemouth. They'll be with providers like Abri, Vivid, and other local councils.

What's in it for me?

- Learn practical skills you'll use day-to-day
- Discover how to effectively engage with housing providers
- Gain confidence in meetings and discussions
- Understand how to resolve housing issues
- Enjoy free refreshments and lunch
- Opportunity to win prizes in the raffle

Spring into action

Your essential home maintenance checklist

As the sun starts to shine, the days get longer, and we all stumble out of hibernation, it's a great time to have a spring clean and check whether you need to report anything to us!

☐ LOOK FOR DAMP, MOULD, OR LEAKS

☐ CHECK YOUR WINDOWS AND DOORS FOR DAMAGE

☐ INSPECT YOUR WALLS AND CEILINGS FOR CRACKS

☐ TEST YOUR SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

☐ REPORT ANY REPAIRS TO EITHER YOUR HOUSING OFFICE OR REPAIRS TEAM

Details on page 2 or contact the repairs team on **023 9284 1311**, or email **repairssupportteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

☐ UPDATE US ABOUT HOUSEHOLD CHANGES OR NEW SUPPORT NEEDS

☐ CHECK YOU'RE NOT MISSING OUT ON ANY BENEFITS OR BETTER UTILITY RATES

☐ HAVING A CLEAR OUT?

Consider using bulk collection services (you might get a free one with council tax allowance)

☐ SELL OR DONATE UNUSED ITEMS

If you haven't worn it in the last year, it doesn't fit, or you don't love it, get rid! If you're never going to read it or play with it again, get rid!

☐ DISPOSE OF LARGE ITEMS AT YOUR LOCAL TIP

Not in communal areas!

Meanwhile, we'll be:

- Carrying out tenancy update visits and stock condition surveys to make sure your homes are the best they can be
- Giving you advice about any money or life worries
- Being present on your estates to make sure everything is running smoothly
- Working with you to solve any problems together

Let's get social this summer

Here's a whole host of free and low-cost events and activities to enjoy.

Portsmouth

VE Day 80 event

 **Sunday 11 May**
 **The D-Day Story Museum, Southsea**
 thedaystory.com/ve-day

Join the museum for an array of activities to mark 80 years since Victory in Europe (8 May). Check their website above for more info closer to the time.

UK Pride

 **7 June (parade starts at 11am)**
 **Southsea Common** (parade runs from Southsea Beach Cafe to Canoe Lake)

Portsmouth is hosting UK Pride 2025! Free festival featuring Nadine Coyle, Drag Race stars, and more. Visit Southsea Common for this volunteer-run celebration.

Southsea Food Festival

 **14–15 June, 10am–6pm**
 **Palmerston Road**

Enjoy the tastes of summer with over 40 food and drink stalls, cooking demonstrations from local chefs, and live music.

Portsmouth Kite Festival

 **26–27 July, 10am–5pm**
 **Southsea Common**

Free flying displays, kite-making workshops for children, and food vendors make this a perfect family day out.



Love Southsea Market

 **25, 26 May and 29, 30 June, 10am–4pm**
 **Palmerston Road**

The Love Southsea Markets continue to support the local community by bringing you local makers, artists, creators, and traders. Discover unique crafts and delicious food.

Port Solent Summer Festival

 **13–14 July, all day**
 **Port Solent**

Explore over 100 market stalls while enjoying live music from local bands, street entertainment, and delicious food and drink.



Hampshire's Farmers' Market

 **19 May, 16 June, 21 July, 18 August, 10am–2pm**
 **Palmerston Road**

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

Hotwalls Open Studios

 **25 May, 29 June, 27 July, 31 August, 11am–4pm**
 **Hotwalls Studios, Old Portsmouth**

All 13 studios will open their doors for the public to chat with artists, watch demonstrations, and buy unique artwork. Enjoy refreshments at The Canteen and special guest artists in the Historic Round Tower.



Gosport

Family Food, Fun and Fitness

21 May, 18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 1.30–3pm

Bridgemary Library, Gosport

Book at hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk

These free sessions aim to work with you to gain the confidence to start cooking from scratch and making mealtimes a real family activity.

Summer Fun in the Park

27 July, 1–4pm

Leesland Park, Gosport

Free entry for a day of family activities, games, face painting, and refreshments. Bring a picnic and enjoy the summer sunshine!



Waterlooville

Multi-sports Club

Every Wednesday from April to September, 5–6pm

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.

Resident Participation Centre

37 Sharps Road, Havant, PO9 5QJ

All the following events take place at the address above. If you want more info about any of them, get in touch:

housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

023 9268 8825

Kids Club

Tuesday 27 May

Join our Kids Club for crafts, gardening, games, and baking. Limited spaces available.

All Things Stitch

Tuesdays: 29 April, 27 May, 10 June, 24 June, 10am–1pm

Love knitting, crochet, or sewing? Join us to share tips, learn new tricks, and bring your projects to life, one stitch at a time.

Garden Club

Every other Tuesday 11am–1pm

Get your hands dirty and help revive our garden for summer! We'll be planting flowers, enjoying the fresh air, and watching the garden bloom.

Craft Club

Every Monday, 10am–1pm

Get your creative juices flowing with a variety of crafts including Easter wreaths, macrame rainbows, and wind chimes. All skill levels welcome.

One Pot Cooking Club

First Wednesday of the month: 7 May, 4 June, 11am–1pm

Love cooking or want to learn new recipes? Join us for budget-friendly meals like Sweet Potato Curry and Vegetable Paella.

Monthly Bingo

Third Wednesday of the month: 21 May, 18 June, 11am–1pm

It's time to shout BINGO! Join us for fun-filled bingo sessions with fantastic prizes.

Community Cuppa

Every other Wednesday: 30 April, 14 and 28 May, 11 and 25 June, 11am–1pm

Join us for a warm cuppa, a biscuit, and a good chat. Perfect for meeting new friends and catching up.



LET'S LAUGH

WHY DID THE CHICKEN TAKE A NAP?

BECAUSE IT WAS EGGS-HAUSTED!

WHY DID THE ROBIN GO TO THE HOSPITAL?

FOR A TWEET-MENTI!

HOW DO BEES GET TO SCHOOL?

ON A SCHOOL BUZZ!

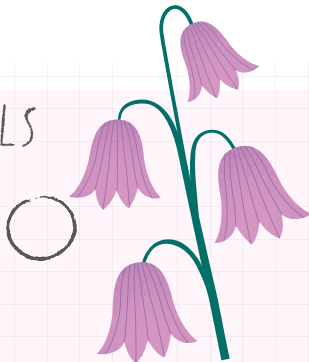
WHAT TYPE OF GARDEN DOES A BAKER LOVE?

A FLOUR GARDEN

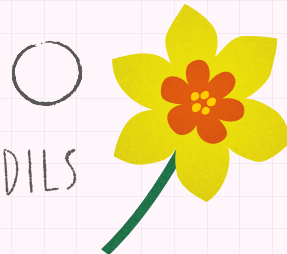
WHAT DO YOU CALL A PLANT THAT ROARS?

A DANDE-LION!

BLUEBELLS



DAFFODILS



TULIPS

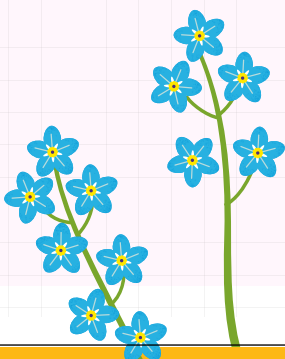


LET'S FIND

How many of these flowers can you find on your spring walks?

Tick them off when you find one!

CHERRY BLOSSOMS



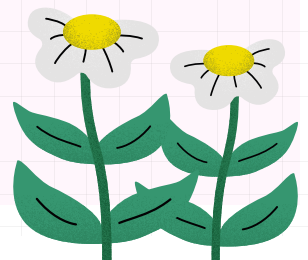
FORGET-ME-NOTS



DANDELIONS



DAISIES



BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

budget-friendly indoor gardens

Want to create a green haven in your home without breaking the bank?
Here's how to get started with indoor gardening on a budget!

Simple terrariums

Transform everyday containers into mini gardens using items you might already have.

Clean pasta sauce jars or charity shop glass containers make perfect homes for small plants.

Layer the bottom with collected pebbles, add a sprinkle of activated charcoal (£2 from pet shops), then potting soil (£1 from pound shops), and finally small plants.

Total cost: under £5!



Creative containers

Think outside the plant pot!

You can use:

- Old mugs and teacups
- Painted tin cans
- Plastic milk bottles cut in half
- Colanders for naturally draining herbs



Windowsill herbs

Growing herbs saves money and adds freshness to your cooking.

Start basil, mint, or chives from seed packets (30p-£1 each) in recycled containers.

Remember to add drainage holes and catch excess water with a saucer.



Money-saving tips

✂ Take cuttings from friends' plants

f Join **Portsmouth plant swap** groups on Facebook

🛒 Check **supermarket reduced sections**

💧 Water with **cooled cooking water**

☕ Use **coffee grounds** as free fertilizer (ask local cafes)



Want to get involved in some outdoor gardening?

Join one of our gardening projects in West Leigh, Landport or Somerstown to learn new skills and meet likeminded, friendly people. Interested? Call us on **023 9283 4835** or email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Let's talk about

hate crime



At Portsmouth Homes, we want everyone to feel **safe in their homes**. If you're the victim of a hate crime or incident, please report it to your housing officer.

What is a hate crime?

A hate crime is any act that is driven by hostility, prejudice, or hatred towards someone's disability, race or skin colour, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

Anyone can be a victim if you've been targeted because of who you, your friends or family are or who the offender thinks you are.

What does a hate crime look like?

Hate crimes could include name-calling or verbal abuse, graffiti or abusive writing, property damage, threats or intimidation, bullying or harassment, physical attacks or violence.

Why should I report a hate crime?

Reporting helps you get support, ensures offenders are brought to justice, and can prevent it from happening to others.

Report it to your housing officer

If a hate crime happens to you, you see one happen, or you know someone it has happened to, tell the police and your housing officer as soon as possible. Our housing officers are trained to support residents affected by hate crimes. They also work with partner agencies to investigate and take action against offenders when there's evidence.

You can also get help from

Citizens Advice

☎ 0344 411 1444

🌐 citizenadvice.org.uk

Stop Hate UK

☎ 0800 138 1625

🌐 stophateuk.org

Victim Support

☎ 0808 168 9111

🌐 victimsupport.org.uk

Tell MAMA

🌐 tellmamauk.org

Galop

☎ 0207 704 2040

🌐 galop.org.uk

Find this info online at
portsmouth.gov.uk/hatecrime

FosterPortsmouth

"It can be so rewarding. Make that call... it'll change your life!"

Foster carers
Alex and Tom.

Urgent need for more foster carers

Could you inspire the next generation?

We urgently need more foster carers in and around Portsmouth* for children aged 7-12 and those with additional needs. Whether you live in council housing or own your home, you can be a foster carer. What matters most is having the space in your home and heart to care for a child.

If you or someone you know has:

- experience in caring for children or people with additional needs
- enthusiasm, patience and availability

Then please reach out to us and help vulnerable older children from our city reach their potential. Plus, you'll get local training, 24/7 support, and additional fees on top of allowances.

Find out more:

 foster.portsmouth.gov.uk/7to12s

 0300 1312797

 info@lafosteringse.org.uk

 Foster Portsmouth on Facebook

*If you're outside of Portsmouth, the contact info above will signpost you to your nearest service.

Embracing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in your homes



At Portsmouth Homes, we want you to know we're committed and working hard to provide you with landlord services that embrace equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

We do this because we want all of you to...

- ♥ Feel valued and respected in your homes and communities
- ♥ Have equal access to services and opportunities, regardless of background or circumstance

To help achieve this, we've...

- ✓ Improved the accessibility of our communications to you
- ✓ Been working to remove barriers that prevent some of you from fully taking part in council decisions
- ✓ Continued to provide staff with cultural awareness training

Your experiences matter. If you have ideas on how we can better serve you and your community, let us know!

 housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

 023 9283 4835

COME AND CHAT TO US IN PERSON

Got a question about your energy bills?

In a dispute with your energy supplier?

Pop by the civic offices on the first Wednesday of every month to meet and chat to our friendly experts in the Switched On Portsmouth team. They'll be in the reception area from 9am-4pm, ready for you to drop by if you're having any issues with your energy supplier or struggling to pay your energy bills.

WHEN TO COME AND SEE US

SWITCHED ON 
PORTSMOUTH

Planning on stopping by on any of these dates?

Look out for our logo when you enter the reception area!

7
MAY

4
JUNE

2
JULY

6
AUGUST

Pop-in for a chat!

Contact the Switched On Portsmouth team on the freephone, email or visit:

 0800 260 5907

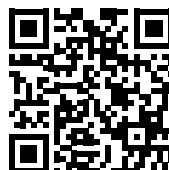
 hello@switchedonportsmouth.co.uk

 switchedonportsmouth.co.uk

HAVE YOUR SAY

Win!

a heated blanket



Take just five minutes to complete our survey and you could win a cozy heated blanket.

To take the survey, visit switchedonportsmouth.co.uk/feedback-form or scan the QR code.

Winner announced Friday, 21 May. Good luck!

Don't let the bed bugs bite

Spot them early, act quickly

What to look for

Small reddish-brown insects

About 6mm — 

Dark spots on mattress edges

Blood spots on sheets



Groups of itchy bites on your upper body



Reduce the risk of getting them:



Check second-hand furniture and clothes carefully before bringing home



Reduce clutter around beds to eliminate hiding spots



Hoover regularly and maintain good house hygiene



If you're travelling, keep luggage raised and inspect hotel beds



Wash clothes in hot water after trips

How to get rid of them:

It's very difficult to treat bed bugs yourself. That's why you should reach out for support to get it sorted as soon as possible. Here's what you can do:

1. Book a home visit (for Portsmouth residents*)

The home visit will consist of laying down monitoring traps, giving you advice, and explaining next steps if the traps show signs of bed bugs.

How to book: Call **023 9283 4251** or contact your housing office (page 2).

2. Get your home treated

If the traps show signs of bed bugs, safe insecticides will be applied to any infested areas and you'll be given after-care advice.

There's usually a charge for this type of service but costs can vary based on your individual situation. Contact your housing office or pest control service for more info.

**Pest control isn't a landlord service. So if you live outside of Portsmouth, you'll need to contact your local council's pest control or environmental health service directly. If you need help with this or want more advice, you can still contact your housing office.*

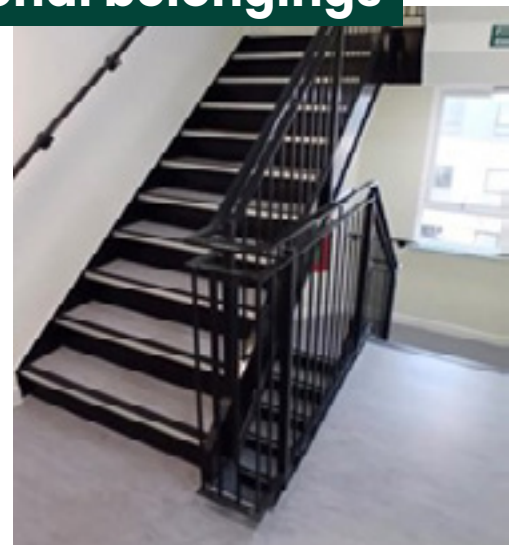
Early detection means quicker, more effective treatment. Visit portsmouth.gov.uk/bedbugs for more info.

Zero-tolerance

Keeping communal areas clear of personal belongings



This is how your communal areas should look at all times



What counts as a communal area?

Stairways

Corridors

Communal balconies

Lifts

Shared gardens

What are the rules?

You must **NOT** store any belongings or rubbish in any of these areas. This includes, but not limited to:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✗ Bikes and E-bikes | ✗ Wheelchairs |
| ✗ Pushchairs | ✗ E-scooters |
| ✗ Door mats | ✗ Swimming pools and hot tubs |
| ✗ Plant pots | ✗ Trampolines |
| ✗ Mobility scooters | ✗ Climbing frames or similar |

Why is it important?

- We have to keep your escape route clear in case of emergencies, like a fire
- It's the law - nothing should block your way out or create smoke
- It keeps you safe and helps firefighters do their job

We know this can be annoying, but your safety comes first. We're zero-tolerance but we're also here to help. If you have questions or need help moving any items, contact us:

 **023 9268 8444**

 **portsmouth.gov.uk/estate**

What happens if we find items in communal areas?

Step 1

We'll discuss the issue with you directly and you'll need to remove the item as agreed, as soon as possible.

Step 2

If the item is considered high risk, you'll need to remove it as a matter of urgency.

Step 3

If items are not removed as agreed, we may remove them without further notice. If this happens, you'll get a letter informing you of the removal and a removal charge will be added to your tenancy account.

For more info on the rules around communal areas, visit **portsmouth.gov.uk/communalareas**



PENSION CREDIT.

ARE YOU MISSING OUT ON £3,900?

**Many pensioners aren't claiming
the Pension Credit they qualify for.**

**It's worth on average £3,900 a year, which can
help you to stay warm, pay bills or do more of
what you enjoy.**

Check if you qualify

- **If you're single**

If you're single and aged 66 or older with a total weekly income under £218 you're likely to get it.

If you have a weekly income of under £235 then you may get it.

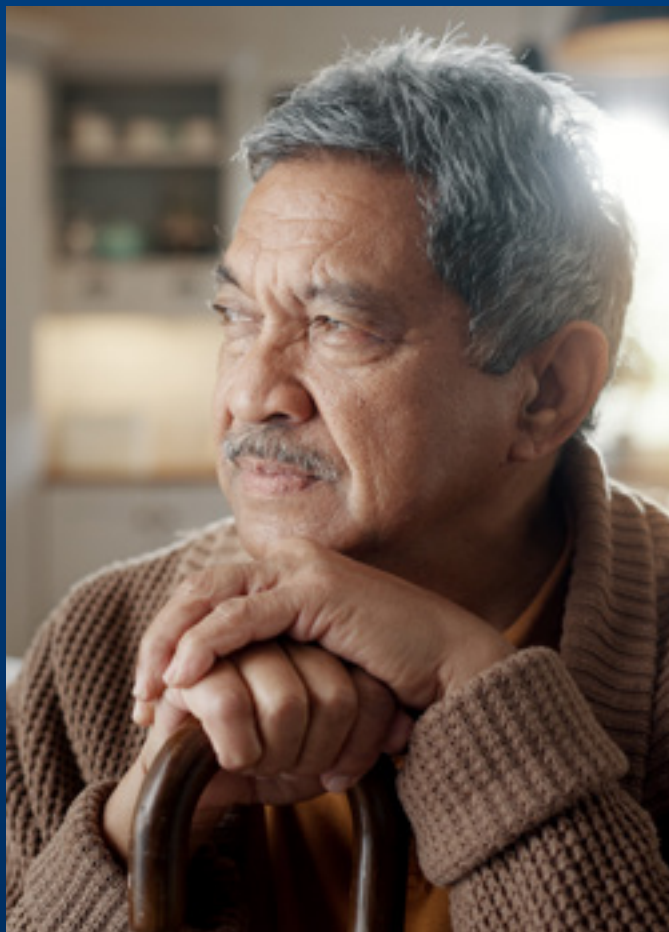
- **If you're a couple**

If you're a couple and both of pension age, with a combined weekly income under £333 you're likely to get it.

If you have a total weekly income of under £350 then you may get it.

- **If your income is higher**

If your income is higher you might still be eligible if you have a disability, you care for someone or have housing costs.



There isn't a savings limit for Pension Credit. However, if you have over £10,000 in savings, this will affect how much you receive.

Claiming Pension Credit doesn't just top up your income, it can help you qualify for other support too.

The council is here to help.

To find out about the help available, call our friendly cost of living team on **023 9284 1047**.

Outside of Portsmouth?
Visit hants.gov.uk/costofliving



**WHAT
YOU
NEED TO
KNOW**

Bedroom tax

The 'Bedroom Tax' means your **Housing Benefit or Universal Credit** may be reduced if you have more bedrooms than the government thinks you need.

What counts as the right number of bedrooms?

You're allowed one bedroom for:

- You and your partner
- Each person aged 16 or over
- Two children of the same gender under 16
- Two children under 10 (boys and girls can share)
- Any other child

If you have "extra" bedrooms, your benefit might be cut by:

- 14% for one extra bedroom
- 25% for two or more extra bedrooms

You might not face these cuts if you're pension age, need a carer overnight, have a disabled child who needs their own room, or are a foster carer.

Need help? Call your **local housing office** (page 2). You might qualify for extra help with housing costs.

Score big discounts with **FREE** leisure cards

Portsmouth Leisure Card

If you get means-tested benefits and live in PO1-PO6, this card unlocks up to 50% off at loads of facilities like sports centres, pools, golf, museums, beach huts and more.

Just pop by your local library or housing office with proof of benefits to apply, or head to portsmouth.gov.uk/leisurecard

Horizon Leisure discounts

This is Havant Borough Council's discount scheme, and works in a similar way. Find out more at horizonlc.com

Live elsewhere? Search 'leisure card' on your local council's website.



Is my home *right* for a dog?

Our expert team at the stray dog kennels want you to consider these four key things before bringing a pooch into your home...

1. Check our current pet policy

There's sometimes different rules for keeping dogs depending on where you live. Double check what's allowed by contacting your housing office (page 2) or going to portsmouth.gov.uk/petspolicy

2. Consider your lifestyle

Dogs need daily walks, playtime, and companionship. Can you provide this consistently throughout their 10–15-year lifespan?

3. Outdoor space matters

While regular walks help, homes with gardens give dogs freedom to exercise, play and go to the toilet throughout the day – something that's harder to replicate in flats without outdoor space.

4. Budget for all costs

Beyond food and routine vet visits, consider potential expenses for illness or injury, insurance (which increases with age), professional training, and care options when you're away.

Making an informed choice means a happier home for both you and your four-legged companion!

PS. We recently asked for your feedback on our pet policy – head to page 5 for more info.



Need help knowing if your home is a good fit for a dog?

Contact our brilliant and friendly stray dog kennels team for advice:

☎ 023 9268 8181

📄 portsmouth.gov.uk/dogkennels



Stay

connected

Follow Portsmouth Homes on Facebook

One page, more updates!

We've simplified how you get your housing updates on social media. The 'House Talk' and 'Portsmouth City Council Resident Engagement Service' Facebook pages have now merged into one easy-to-follow page: Portsmouth Homes.

By following our new page, you'll get:

- The latest news and updates
- Handy advice and tips
- Community event info
- Opportunities to get involved
- Local support services

Search and follow **'Portsmouth Homes'** on Facebook to keep informed!

Already following our previous 'House Talk' page?

You'll automatically see this page is now 'Portsmouth Homes' – no action needed!

SPRING CHICKEN CASSEROLE

Brought to you by The Somerstown Hub Café

Café chef Brendan says this is the perfect springtime family meal that you need to try!

What you'll need

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 8 boneless skinless chicken thighs
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 brown onions (sliced or diced)
- 3 garlic cloves or 1 tbsp pureed garlic
- 3 tbsp plain flour
- 1 tsp salt & 1 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 480ml chicken stock
- 500g mushrooms (sliced)
- 500g carrots (sliced)
- 60ml double cream

What you need to do

1. Preheat your oven to gas mark 4 or 180° and heat the oil in a frying pan on medium heat and add the chicken thighs, lightly browning them on all sides (approx. 5 minutes).
2. Remove the chicken from the pan and place in an oven proof dish.
3. In the frying pan, turn down the heat to low-medium and add the butter and onions. Cook them until softened (approx. 5 mins).
4. Stir in the garlic and cook for another 3 minutes. then add the flour, salt, pepper, dried thyme and stir.
5. Stir in the chicken stock and gradually bring everything to a boil. Add the mushrooms and carrots.
6. Add everything to the oven proof dish. Place a lid (or foil) on the dish and cook in your oven for 3-4 hours or until the veg are soft.
7. Once cooked, use two forks to shred the chicken in the dish.
8. Add the double cream to the dish and stir well.
9. Voila! Serve this dish with mashed potato or buttered bread.

 Serves 4

 Time: 3-4.5 hours

 Skill level: Easy

Pop by the café!

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!
We're on the first floor of the Somerstown Hub. For more information, visit pycportsmouth.co.uk/community/hub-cafe

