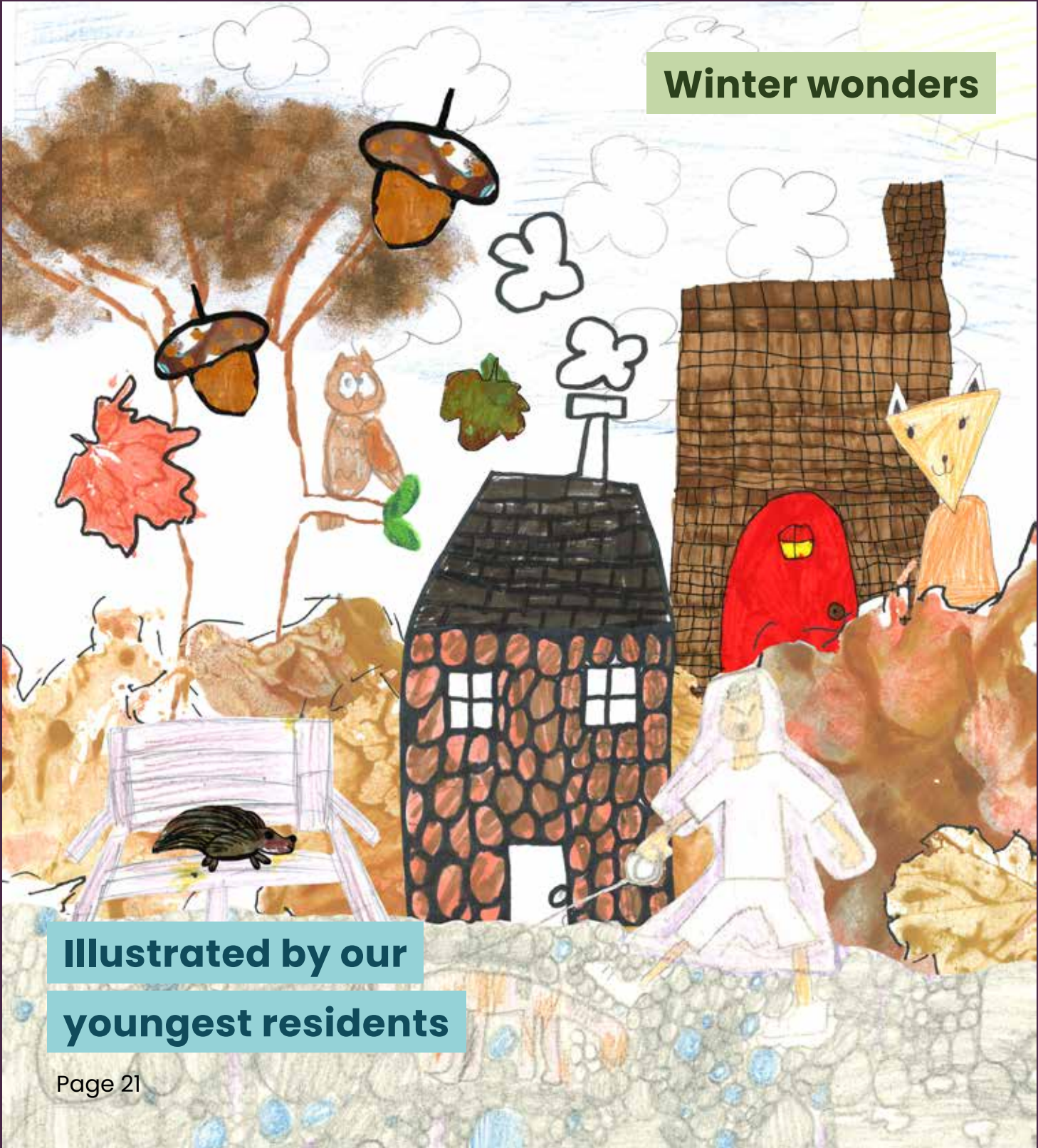


house talk

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



Winter wonders

Illustrated by our
youngest residents

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Why you need to know about
stock condition surveys

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Portsmouth
Homes



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

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Resident Engagement Team

We're here for you! We can answer your questions, help you get involved in a community group, can listen to your suggestions and millions of other things. Plus it's really easy for you to get in touch with us.

How to contact us

Write to us at **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](https://www.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**

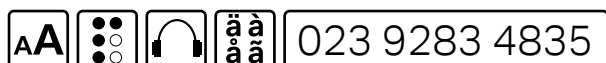
Know anyone who needs this in a different language?

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](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

Hello!

I'm Steve Groves

I lead the repairs service

The repairs service is made up of surveyors, customer repairs officers and contractors, to carry out the right repair at the right time.

We work together to ensure your homes are maintained and compliant with the safety and quality consumer standard. (repairs performance stats)

My team carry out important stock condition surveys to your home, and over the next year we will be partnering with a company called Ridge to get these completed.

See page 4 for more information.

To make us compliant with social housing regulations we need to complete over 12,000 of these surveys by September 2026.

Please allow us access to your home when we call. The visit is quick and simple, and we will check the condition of your home and raise any repairs.



**Don't miss
a thing!**

Get the latest updates, local events, and helpful tips straight to your inbox and feed.

Our monthly Portsmouth Homes newsletter brings you useful info without the spam, and our Facebook page is full of quick updates, videos, and community news.

Go to **portsmouth.gov.uk/portsmouthhomes** or scan the QR codes to sign up and follow us.

Follow us
on Facebook



Sign up for
our newsletter



Meet

Caitlin Winch

Caitlin is our new Domestic Abuse Advisor

We're pleased to welcome Caitlin Winch to Portsmouth Homes. Caitlin's role focuses on supporting tenants and leaseholders affected by domestic abuse. She's helping shape policies, creating support guides for staff and residents, and developing training workshops to raise awareness and improve responses across our communities.

Caitlin is here to help make sure you all feel safe and supported. If you or someone you know needs help, please reach out to your housing or leasehold officer.

Why we need to check your home



“

Someone made a repair the same day!

We need to carry out two types of checks on your home at some point. One is called a **Stock Condition Survey**, and the other is a **Tenancy Update Visit**.

Both require us to visit your home at a time that suits you. These checks will help us keep your homes safe and well-maintained, so it's important you know about them.

Stock Condition Survey

This is a visual check of the fixtures and fittings - such as the kitchen, bathrooms, roof, windows etc.

Here's how it will work:

- **Step 1** - You'll get a letter from Ridge (our contractor) telling you when surveyors will be in your area. During that time, a surveyor will knock on your door to arrange a suitable time for the survey. If you're not home, they'll leave a card with contact details. You'll need to call the number on the card to book a time that works for you.
- **Step 2** - A building surveyor will come to your home for your agreed appointment. They'll be carrying an ID badge, so you know it's them.
- **Step 3** - They'll check each room in your home, including any outdoor space. They'll take photos and measurements - including key areas like your boiler and loft insulation. This is to check the condition and make sure your home is safe.
- **Step 4** - They'll make you aware of any areas that need repairs so you can report it to our repairs team.

Remember!

They usually take place in the Somerstown Hub, but sometimes the venue for the evening session can change. If you want to come along, or you need any help with transport, just give us a call (info on page 2).

Tenancy Update Visits

This one is to make sure we have up to date information and that we haven't missed any opportunities to best support you.

One of our housing officers will carry out the visit, and we'll arrange it in advance with you.

Here's what we'll talk about:

- 🏠 Who's living in your home
- 🏠 Money worries
- 🏠 Rent advice
- 🏠 Repairs and safety checks
- 🏠 How to report issues
- 🏠 Available services
- 🏠 Rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- 🏠 Communication needs

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



We're speeding up planned works

to 22 high-rise buildings across the city

As we continue delivering our improvement plan, we've adjusted the original seven-year programme for high-rises to five years.

Now, by 2030 we expect to have completed - or be in the process of completing - improvements to most of our high-rise buildings. In total, we'll be investing £110m.

This means that if you live in one of these blocks, you'll have your home upgraded. You may also get a new bathroom or kitchen as part of planned works.

You may need to relocate temporarily while work takes place, and our housing team will support you in doing this.

We'll contact you well ahead of time to talk about arrangements for the works, and we'll try to keep any disruption to a minimum.

Residents of Ladywood House have already been told they will be getting improvements, with work starting on site in late 2026.

Looking at our services

As part of the improvement plan, we're also looking at improving how we communicate with you, how easy it is to ask for help or log a repair, and how often you see housing officers.

We've noticed a big change in the way you access our services, and we also need to make changes because of the Social Housing Regulator.

We're looking at moving away from multiple housing offices. Instead, we'll hold community housing surgeries in places like community centres and libraries.

This makes our teams easier to reach for more of you and helps us work more closely with the rest of the community. Housing officers will spend less time behind a desk and more time on estates and visiting tenants at home.

We've already spoken to residents in Buckland, Landport and Portsea about:

- How housing offices are used
- Ideas for pop-up surgeries
- Payment options
- More home visits and local support

We've now written to all residents in these areas for feedback and will keep you updated on next steps.



Neighbours doing great things



Andree

Irene

Each issue we try to shout out some of the people making a positive impact in our communities.

And this time round our resident engagement team asked us to put the spotlight on...

Irene Parris

An Edgbaston House local who hosts daily coffee mornings and much-loved family events throughout the year, going above and beyond to create a warm and welcoming space for her neighbours.

Andree Daniels

Andree Daniels - a resident of Tipton House and equally as inspiring. Andree also hosts coffee mornings and regularly cooks and serves delicious food for the community.

Both Irene and Andree continue to display acts of kindness that put them at the heart of their communities

We're so grateful for everything they do.



Tenants take the lead on communal cleanliness

Twelve tenants recently took action to investigate the cleanliness of communal spaces, following a 10% drop in satisfaction in the 2024 TSM survey.

The scrutiny group visited four blocks to speak with residents and cleaners, review schedules, and meet with management.

Their findings were mixed:

- Sharps Road and Millgate House were praised for being clean, safe, and well-maintained. Weekly cleaning was clearly making a difference.
- Hawthorn Crescent showed wear and tear, with fly-tipped rubbish near bins. Cleaning was underway during the visit.
- Estella Road had visible rubbish, signs of rough sleeping, and flaking paint. Despite cleaning, the block's age made it harder to see the impact.

The group concluded that external issues like fly-tipping and building condition can overshadow the cleaners' hard work.

"We were impressed by the cleaning teams' professionalism and eco-friendly products"

Said the group, and they recommended making their work more visible, either through signage or updates. After this feedback, we also set up a new way for you to share any concerns or compliments for your neighbourhood.

Just search '**neighbourhood services feedback**' on portsmouth.gov.uk

Want to shout out one of your neighbours or get involved in a scrutiny panel? Get in touch (info on page 2)!

What is a resident consortium?

And why you should come along!

"Resident Consortium" might sound a bit formal or even a little scary, but it's actually much simpler (and friendlier!) than it sounds.

So, what is it?

A Resident Consortium is just a group of tenants and leaseholders – people like you – who live in Portsmouth Homes property and want to have a say in how it's run.

It's a way for residents to come together, chat about what's working (and what's not), and help shape the decisions the council makes about homes, neighbourhoods, and services.

Why bother?

Because your opinion counts!

"We're listened to as residents and can make changes to the things that are important to us"

Dawn, resident

By joining in, you can:

- Raise concerns or ideas directly with staff
- Help choose which topics get discussed
- Make sure residents' views are front and centre in housing decisions
- Meet others who care about the same things

No – you don't need to be an expert in housing or policies. You just need to care about your home and community.

Still need convincing?

Get a free tea or coffee at one of the meetings! Just bring this voucher with you and show it to a member of staff.



When and where?

They all take place in the Somerstown Hub in Somerstown, but we can help you with travel if you're not local (just get in touch, info on page 2).

And no need to book - you can either contact us for more info or just turn up if you want!

Here are the next meeting dates

Wednesday 4 December 2025 6pm–8pm	Thursday 8 January 2026 11am–1pm
Wednesday 5 February 2026 6pm–8pm	Thursday 5 March 2026 11am–1pm

Free drink voucher Winter 2025 issue

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

Signed: Date:

Get stuck into a focus group!



All sessions will be held in room 4 at Somerstown Hub, unless they're specified as online meetings.

House Talk

- Thursday 15 January, 10.30am–12pm
- Friday 24 April, 10.30am–12pm

Policies

- Thursday 22 January, 11am–1pm
- Thursday 22 January, 6.30–8pm **ONLINE**
- Thursday 19 March, 11am–1pm
- Thursday 19 March, 6.30–8pm **ONLINE**

Scrutiny*

- Friday 27 February, 11am–1pm

Neighbourhood services

- Thursday 26 March, 11am–1pm

Repairs

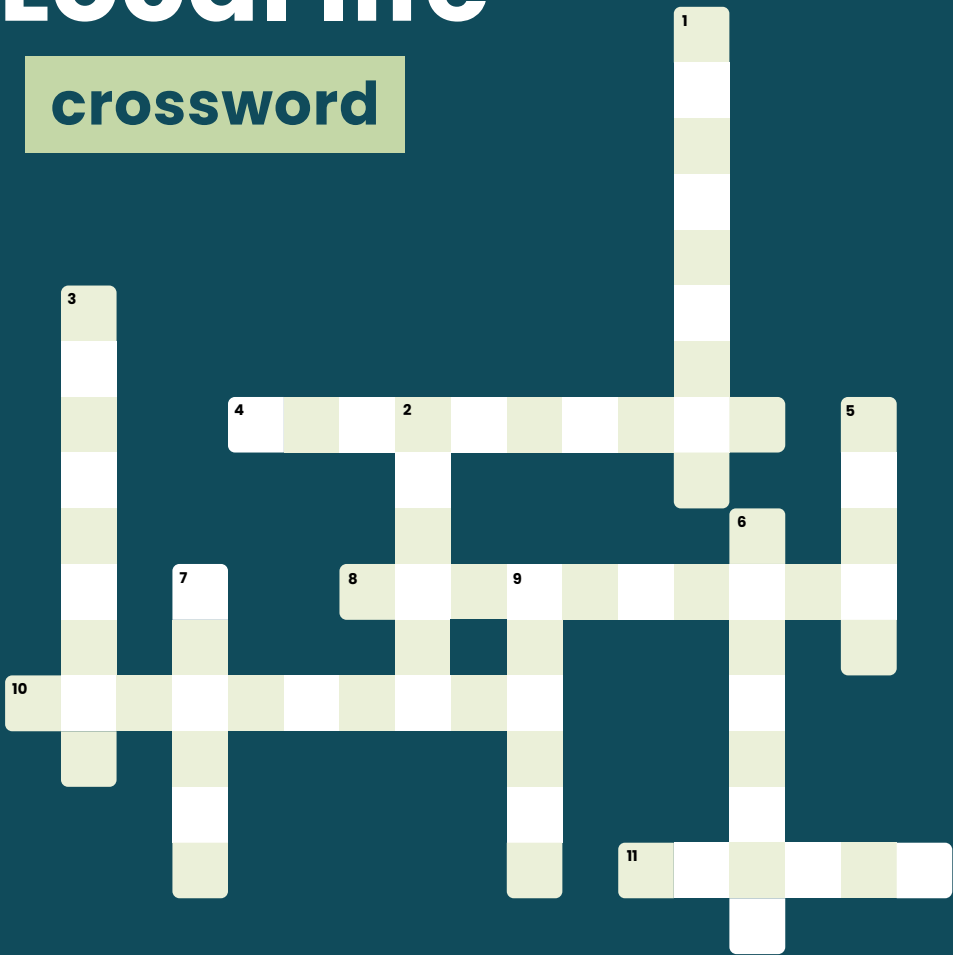
- Thursday 2 April, 11am–1pm

*Scrutiny groups is a four-to-six-week project. The subject is to be confirmed.

Interested? Get in touch! (contact info on page 2).

Local life

crossword



Across

- 4. Fareham's bustling town centre street
- 8. The name of our historic dockyard city
- 10. _____ Retail Park: Popular shopping centre in Waterlooville
- 11. Tenant Satisfaction _____ (we ask you to fill one in each year...)

Down

- 1. Coastal village near Havant with a historic mill and harbour
- 2. What you might do at a class at the Portsmouth Martial Art centre?
- 3. Iconic tower on Portsmouth's waterfront
- 5. Local ferry to the Isle of _____
- 6. Popular shopping outlet in Portsmouth
- 7. _____ Common: Area (and popular dog walking spot) in Portsmouth with a nature reserve
- 9. Someone who pays rent

Answers

Across: 4. West Street, 8. Portsmouth, 10. Wellington, 11. Survey

Down: 1. Langstone, 2. Portsmouth, 3. Spinnaker, 5. Wight, 6. Gunwharf, 7. Milton, 9. Tenant

CHICKEN CURRY

Joanne from the Somerstown Hub Café is sharing one of her favourite fakeaway recipes for you to try this week.

“ This recipe should scratch that takeaway itch, at a fraction of the price!



 Serves 2–3

 Oven: 50 mins/Slow cooker: 4–5 hours

What you'll need

- 2 x chicken breasts
- Half a jar of curry paste
- 1 x onion
- 1 x tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 x tin coconut milk
- Rice or naan for serving

What you need to do

1. Chop the chicken breasts and mix with the ½ jar of curry paste.
2. Fry a chopped onion in a little oil for five minutes on low heat.
3. Turn the heat up, add the chicken and cook for three minutes.
4. Stir in the chopped tomatoes and coconut milk.
5. Pour everything into an oven dish and bake for 40 minutes at 180°C (Gas mark 4) - or a slow cooker for 4-5 hours.
6. Serve with rice or naan.

Want a veggie option?

Chop and boil two sweet potatoes and a small cauliflower for 10 mins.

Fry the onion, add the curry paste, stir in the coconut milk, and then add in the sweet potatoes and cauliflower, plus a tin of chickpeas and a handful of spinach.

Simmer for 30 mins and you're good to go!



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 charges (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.

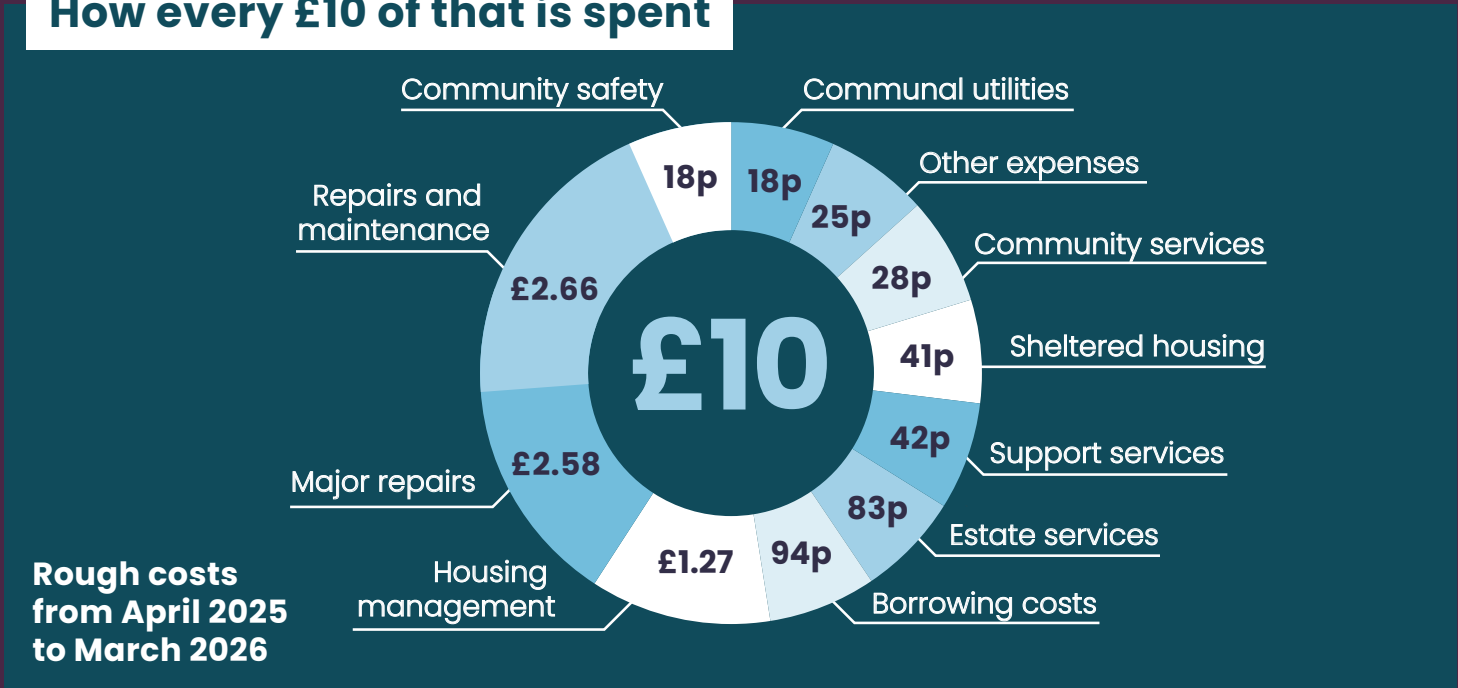
How much you'll pay

Rough income from April 2025 to March 2026



But this won't cover everything we do, so we also need to use £1.99m from council housing reserves account.

How every £10 of that is spent



* 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 sets a maximum limit on how much council rents can increase – this limit is currently 4.8%. The exact amount of any increase hasn't been decided yet, and we'll let you know of any changes before they take place.

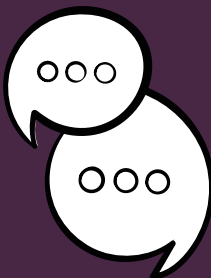
Looking ahead, the government plans to continue setting similar yearly limits until at least 2035, based on The Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%.

Want to find out more about the proposals and how have your say? Come along to one of these sessions:



Thursday 4 December 2025

Somerstown Hub, room 4, 6pm



Tuesday 16 December 2025

Paulsgrove Community Centre at 11am.

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



Tuesday 16 December 2025

If you can't make either of the meetings, there will be another chance to hear about the proposals with an online presentation at 6.30pm on Tuesday 16 December.

Contact us if you're interested in attending any of the sessions above:

✉ housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

☎ 023 9283 4835

Keeping yourself and neighbours safe this winter

Balcony safety



Use window opening restrictors. If you don't have them or they're not working, tell us and we'll install new ones (contact info on next page)



Always keep your balcony door locked when not in use.



Never allow young children access to a balcony without an adult present.



Never lean over, sit or climb on the balcony wall or railing.



Always keep balcony furniture away from the railing,



Never store waste on balconies (this includes BBQs, gas bottles and heaters)



Never discard cigarettes on or over your balcony.



Never modify your balcony.

For more balcony safety support, visit portsmouth.gov.uk/balconysafety

Fire safety

During the holidays, it's easy to forget the everyday safety habits that keep homes, families and neighbours safe.

- Please don't hang decorations in communal hallways or on fire doors.
- Regularly test your smoke alarms.
- Tell us if you don't have a hardwired smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm, or if it doesn't work.
- Be cautious with lit cigarettes, candles and other naked flames.
- Don't leave cooking unattended for long periods or leave your property.

Do you know your evacuation procedure? You need to know this in case of a fire. You can find this online at portsmouth.gov.uk/myfiresafety





Spot and stop damp and mould

As the colder months set in, damp and mould can become more common in homes. With a few simple steps, you can help prevent it and protect your living space.

Living with damp and mould can lead to health problems, especially for children, older people, and those with breathing problems. It can also damage your home and belongings. By reporting it early, we can fix the problem before it gets worse.

What to look out for:

- Dark patches or spots in corners, around windows, or along skirting boards
- A musty smell that doesn't go away

These could be early signs of mould, and it's important to act quickly.

What we'll do when you report it:

1. **Inspect your home within 10 working days of your report**
2. **Find the cause, not just treat the symptoms**
3. **Give you advice on how to reduce condensation**
4. **Follow up within six months to check everything is still okay**
5. **If overcrowding or other issues are making it hard to manage damp and mould, we can offer support.**

You play a key role in preventing and managing damp and mould. Here's what you can do:

- Report issues immediately - such as leaks, broken extractor fans, or windows that won't open.
- Always allow us access for inspections and repairs.
- Don't wait - report it early if you spot any signs of black mould, even a small amount. We'll inspect your property within two weeks of your report.



Top tips to reduce damp and mould

- **Create air-flow** - Use extractor fans or open windows slightly when cooking, showering, or drying clothes.
- **Maintain a healthy temperature** - Keep rooms between 18–21°C.
- **Wipe away condensation** - Regularly clean windows and windowsills to stop moisture building up.

PS. We recently reviewed our damp and mould policy - head to page 15 for more info.

Call **023 9284 1311** or email **customerrepairsteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)

What are they and why are they important?

As your landlord, we must make sure electrical systems are in good repair and free from hazards. That's why we carry out EICRs, so we can spot and fix any electrical issues early. We need access to your home to complete them. They take around four hours, and it might cause some interruptions to your electrical supply during that time.

What does it look like?

-  We'll contact you to organise a visit at a time that suits you.
-  If we can't get hold of you after three tries, we'll visit your home to discuss any challenges in arranging access.
-  A qualified electrician will carry out tests to ensure all electrical circuits are safe and working.
-  After this, we'll issue you a certificate within 28 days of inspection.
-  If there are dangers identified, repairs or improvements will be arranged.
-  Please help us keep your home safe by allowing entry for these inspections.

"I was able to arrange all my visits for a day that suited me, so I didn't have to take time off work"

Any concerns?
Contact us on **023 9284 1311** or email **customerrepairsteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**



Learning from your complaints

We want to be open about the complaints we get and how we're working to make things better.

After looking at this year's complaints, we've found that communication around repairs is your most common area of concern. This has become a key area of learning for us.

In response, we're working closely with our contractors to improve how we communicate with you. This includes confirming appointments with you via text messages and ensuring follow-up letters are emailed promptly after investigations.

Learn more about making complaints at portsmouth.gov.uk/housingcomplaints

Seen adverts about making a claim against your landlord for not fixing things in your home?

It's important you know the risks and processes of disrepair claims. Learn more at portsmouth.gov.uk/disrepair-claims

POLICY UPDATES

We've just reviewed and introduced the following key policies to improve our services:

- Damp and Mould (reviewing)
- Landlord Complaints (reviewing)
- Electrical Safety (new)
- Working Together - Portsmouth Homes Access (new)

The Working Together - Portsmouth Homes Access policy outlines when important surveys (like those we talked about on page 4) should be carried out.

This will help us better plan and support your housing needs.

We've also created a new page on our website where you can share your views on policies.

You can find it by heading to **portsmouth.gov.uk/housingconsultations**

You can also find all of our policies at **portsmouth.gov.uk/housingpolicy**

Or you can make a **BIG** impact in a small way by coming to a policy focus group!

Find out more on page 8.

We'll continue to update you on policies via House Talk, our Facebook page and the new Portsmouth Homes newsletter.

"I like the policy group because the council is listening to our views on everything. Come along, get involved, and find out."

Selling an ex-council home?

We'd love to hear from you

Portsmouth City Council is actively looking to buy back ex-council homes to help meet the growing need for temporary accommodation. In 2024/25, demand rose by 54%, which put pressure on services and budgets.

To tackle this, the council is investing in 200 homes over the next two years to provide better, more affordable housing for those in need.

If you or someone you know is selling a former council property, please get in touch.

Head to **portsmouth.gov.uk/sellmyhome** for more info.





STRUGGLING WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS?

Switched On Portsmouth are here to help. We're a team of energy professionals here to offer free support and advice when it comes to your energy bills, suppliers and keeping your home energy efficient.

We can offer support with

- A dispute with your energy supplier
- Referrals into schemes that offer free energy upgrades, white good replacements, solar panels, air source heat pumps etc
- Day to day energy saving tips

What have residents had to say?

"I had a good experience with the team, it was very quick to get what I needed. It was a really good service and we've seen a difference in our bills." Carla

Where can you find us next?

Drop-in to see us at the Civic Offices in Guildhall the first Wednesday of every month:

- Wednesday 3 December 2025
- Wednesday 7 January 2026
- Wednesday 4 February 2026
- Wednesday 4 March 2026

Join our coffee and a chat

The Switched On Portsmouth team will be at Portsmouth Central Library on Wednesday 26 November, 10am-2pm.

Millions of households in the UK live in fuel poverty, meaning they can't afford their energy bills, so they are forced to live in cold homes. During the winter, it can be hard to heat your home and stay healthy.

Come talk to the team if you're struggling with your energy bills and they can refer you to schemes or help tackle disputes with your energy supplier.

You can get a free tea, coffee and slice of cake from the Lily & Lime café upstairs when you get a sticker from the team. Just show this article to the café and redeem your free drink.

There will also be a giveaway, so you can be in with the chance to win a gift voucher, slow cooker or heated blanket.

Come and chat with us!

📅 Wednesday 26 November, 10am–2pm

📍 Portsmouth Central Library, Guildhall Walk, PO1 2DX, Reception

YOU COULD WIN

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

Your views matter.

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

- Survey closes midnight on 31 December 2025.
- Winner drawn 12 January 2026.

📱 Complete the survey at
portsmouth.gov.uk/tsm

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



Street art brings even more colour to Portsmouth

Portsmouth's LOOK UP Festival returned to our streets again this September, giving us over 100 stunning new murals across 40+ locations.

But what's most important is that you helped make it happen.

We teamed up with some of the local and international artists from this year's festival, and as many of you as possible, to choose artwork themes and sites.

Some of those new sites included Southampton Road, Central Street, Old Edinburgh House, and Hilsea Lido Café.

Thanks to your input, Portsmouth continues to be considered the street art capital of the UK!

Want to see more? Follow Look Up Portsmouth on Facebook to explore the art and stay updated.



From left to right: Val Gratton, Mandy Buxey, and Greig Anderson.

Your new resident reps

Meet Val Gratton, Mandy Buxey, and Greig Anderson - the latest team of residents, chosen by you, to represent your voice when key housing decisions get made throughout the year.

The trio were elected on 6 November, and they're ready to make sure your views are heard.

But they can only represent the views you choose to share.

If you'd like us to get in touch when we're gathering resident feedback ahead of important meetings, just let us know (contact details on page 2).

Let's get out and about!

Here's a calendar of some fun and low-cost activities and days out to enjoy this winter.



Standing With Giants - For Your Tomorrow

📅 22 October–30 November
📍 Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road
🌐 royalarmouries.org/fort-nelson

A powerful tribute installation honouring those who gave their lives on D-Day.

Teach Portsmouth Support and Teaching Assistant Jobs Fair

📅 22 November, 10–11.45am and 12pm–2pm
📍 Central Library (Third floor)
🌐 teachportsmouth.co.uk/events

Make new connections and explore routes into a career in education.

Eastney Engine Houses Open Day

📅 30 November, 10am–3pm
📍 Henderson Road, Southsea
🌐 eastneyenginehouses.co.uk

Explore restored Victorian beam engines in steam.



Festival of Christmas Markets

📅 6–7 December 10am–4pm
📍 The Boardwalk, Port Solent,
🌐 portsolent.com

Over 100 stalls from local makers and artisans, festive food, and free parking all day.



Love Southsea Market

📅 Various dates, 9am–5pm Saturday,
9am–4pm Sunday
1–2 November, 15 November, 6–7 December,
13–14 December and 20–21 December
📍 Palmerston Road, Southsea
🌐 lovesouthsea.co.uk

Local makers, street food, art, vintage, and more.

Christmas Lights Switch-On

📅 22 December, 4pm–6pm
📍 Commercial Road
🌐 rediscoverportsmouth.co.uk/events

Celebrate the season with music, lights and festive cheer.



Christmas Fair

- 📅 22 December, 12pm–3pm
- 📍 St Luke's Church, Southsea
- 📱 Search 'St Luke's Church Southsea' on Facebook

Christmas Market

- 📅 22–24 December
- 📍 Commercial Road
- 🌐 rediscoverportsmouth.co.uk/events

Gifts, food, and festive fun.

Christmas Eve Sing-Along with Amba Tremain

- 📅 24 December
- 📍 The Gaiety Southsea, 1pm–4pm
- 📱 book.events/gaietybarsouthsea

Family-friendly, free admission, festive food, mulled wine and mince pies.



Resident Participation Centre

37 Sharps Road, Havant, PO9 5QJ

✉ housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

☎ 023 9283 4835

Want to attend any of the centre's events?
Let the team know using the info above.

Christmas Cake Decorating

📅 20, 27 Nov and 4, 11 Dec, 11am–1pm

Unwrap a new decorating technique each week.
All materials provided.



Christmas Crafts

📅 1, 8, 15 December, 11am–1pm

Make wreaths, baubles, and festive jars.
All materials provided.

JANUARY 2026

Crafty Creations

📅 Alternate Mondays from 5 January, 11am–1pm

Mindful Moments

📅 Alternate Mondays from 12 January, 11am–1pm

ONGOING

Kids Club

📅 Tuesdays during school breaks, 11am–1pm

All Things Stitch

📅 Tuesdays during term time, 11am–1pm

Foodie Friends

📅 First and third Wednesdays of the month, 11am–1pm

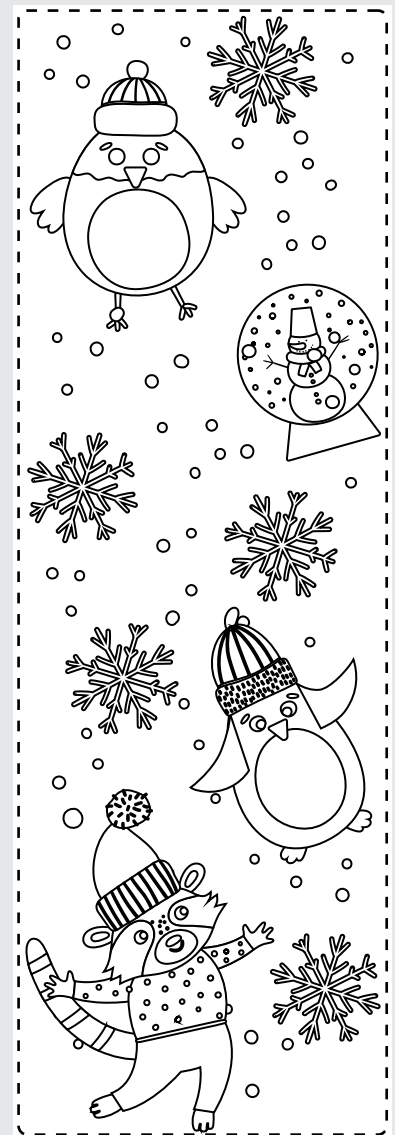
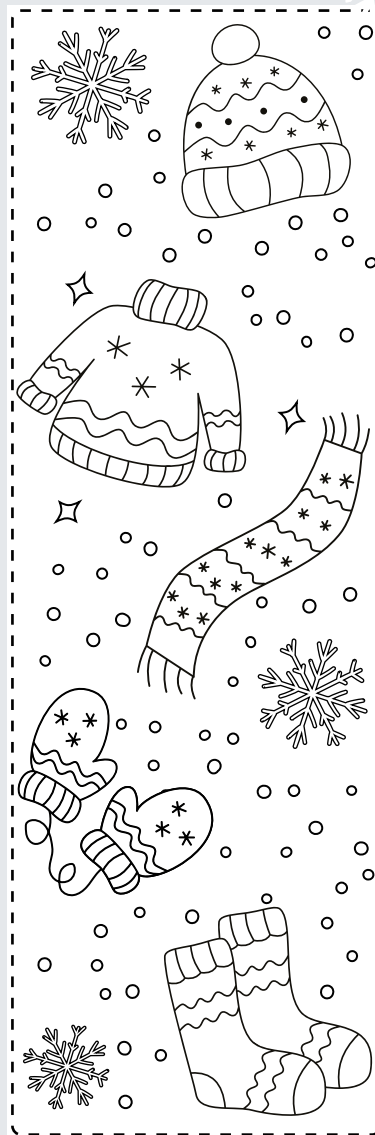
Bingo

📅 Second Wednesday of the month, 11am–1pm

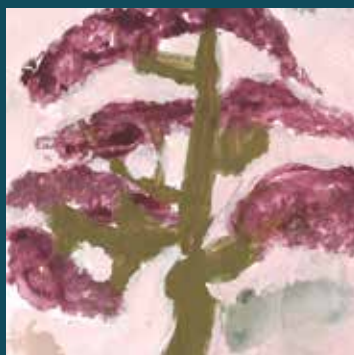
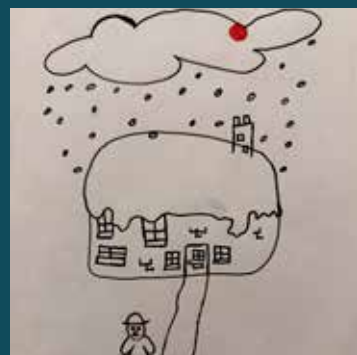
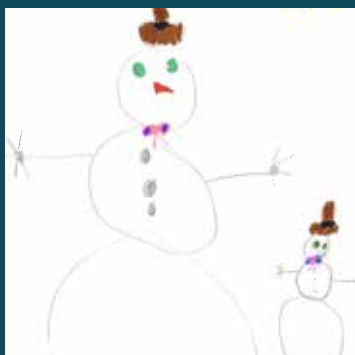
LET'S COLOUR BOOKMARKS!

How colourful can you make these bookmarks?

Can you cut them out (with the help of an adult) and give them as a gift to someone?



Your wonderful winter drawings!



Thank you to everyone who took part!

We asked some of the children who attend our adventure playgrounds to draw our front cover for this issue of House Talk. The theme was 'Autumn or Winter in Portsmouth'. Check out all the amazing creativity from the young people whose artwork brings life, colour, and heart to our adventure playgrounds.



Template



Instructions

You'll need

- Tracing paper (parchment or greaseproof paper will work just as well)
- Thick card (e.g. from a cereal box)
- Pack of A4 size black card (or your colour of choice)
- Tissue paper, various colours
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Split pins (optional)

Step 1

Prepare your stencils!

Place the tracing paper over the template image on the previous page.

Draw the outline of the light and the string with a pencil.

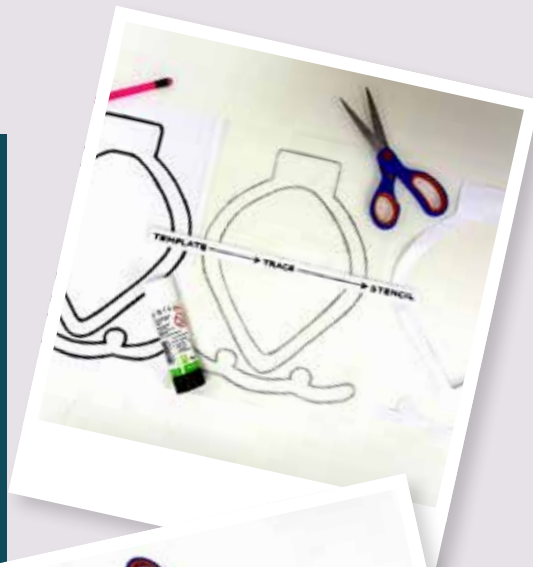
Flip over the tracing paper, place on the thick card and draw over the lines to transfer the image, applying gentle pressure as you do so.

Cut out the stencils, including cutting out the centre space of the light.

Step 2

Make your lights

1. Place the stencil for the light on a sheet of black card, draw round it then cut out. Repeat for as many lights as you want.
2. Repeat for the string. You'll need one more string piece than the number of lights (three lights = four strings, four lights = five strings and so on).
3. Cut tissue paper slightly larger than the centre space of each light.
4. Spread glue on one side of each light and press the tissue paper firmly on. This will be the reverse side of your light.
5. Attach the string shape in between each of your lights using glue or split pins to create your light chain. If using split pins, it will have some flexibility when positioning. It will also be easier to store after use.
6. Hang in your window and when the lights are on in your home you will have your very own festive window lights!



Holiday waste and recycling



**Keep it merry,
keep it tidy:
Holiday waste tips**

The festive season brings joy, and a lot of extra rubbish. From packaging and decorations to leftover food, it's easy for bins to overflow. But with a little planning, we can keep our estates clean, safe, and fire-risk free.

Know your bins:



Recycling bin

- Cardboard boxes
- Plain wrapping paper
- Greetings cards (no glitter, ribbons, or batteries)
- Empty tins and plastic sweet tubs



Rubbish bin

- Glittery or shiny wrapping paper
- Tinsel and baubles



HWRC*

- Broken lights and decorations
- Batteries (or place in a clear bag on top of your black bin)
- Small electricals (bagged and placed on top of your recycling bin if you have individual bins)



Cut waste, boost holiday cheer

- Wrap presents early to avoid last-minute piles of packaging
- Buy wrapping paper that can be recycled
- Plan meals and shop smart
- Store and freeze leftovers
- Use your food waste caddy for scraps

Never fly-tip

Dumped waste isn't just unsightly, it's a hazard. If you've got bulky items or excess rubbish, use the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). It's free and easy to book online.

Let's all do our bit to keep the season bright and our neighbourhoods looking their best.

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

HELP IS AVAILABLE! DON'T STRUGGLE ALONE THIS WINTER

This winter, the council is offering a range of support to help residents with rising costs. The Household Support Fund (HSF) provides financial help for essentials like food, energy bills, and household items.

Three schemes are available

- **Family vouchers** - £30 per child for families not receiving free school meals. Opens mid-December.
- **Utilities Payment Scheme** - £150-£200 to help with energy and water bills. Opens in December.
- **Exceptional Hardship Scheme** - One-off payments for essentials like food, furniture, or repairs. Opens in January 2026.

Visit portsmouth.gov.uk/hsf or call **023 9268 8010** to apply.

Wider winter support includes

- **Warm Home Discount** - £150 off electricity bills for eligible households.
- **Winter Fuel Payment** - £100-£300 for pensioners.
- **Warm Spaces** - Free hot drinks and friendly spaces at local libraries.

Cost-of-living help is also available

- Visit portsmouth.gov.uk/costoflivinghub
- Call the helpline on **023 9284 1047** (weekdays 9am-5pm)



Wider winter support includes

- **Warm Home Discount**
£150 off electricity bills for eligible households.
- **Winter Fuel Payment**
£100-£300 for pensioners.
- **Warm Spaces**
Free hot drinks and friendly spaces at local libraries.

Lower your energy bills

Visit switchedonportsmouth.co.uk or call **0800 260 5907** to check if you're eligible for free home energy advice or social tariffs. Find more Switched On Portsmouth info on page 16.

COULD YOU BE MISSING OUT ON SUPPORT?

New research shows that seven million UK households are missing out on £24 billion in unclaimed financial help. You might be eligible for support and not even know it.

Here are just a few examples

- **Pensioners** may qualify for **Pension Credit** and **the Warm Home Discount**.
- **Families** with young children could get **free school meals** or **Healthy Start vouchers**.
- **Disabled residents** may be entitled to **Attendance Allowance**.
- **Unemployed people** might be eligible for **Universal Credit** and **Council Tax Support**.

Even if you think you're not eligible, it's worth checking. Use the benefits calculator on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website to find out what you could claim.



What you'll need

- Details of your income and savings
- Information about your household's benefits and pensions
- Your rent, mortgage, and childcare costs
- Your Council Tax bill

You can also speak to a money advisor at your housing office for free, confidential advice.

Social tariffs are also available for cheaper broadband, water bills, and TV licences. Don't miss out - Google 'social tariffs' and check out either the Ofcom or Money Saving Expert websites.

Thinking about returning to work?

If you're thinking about going back to work, childcare costs can feel overwhelming. But there's support available:

Tax-free childcare

For every £8 you pay in, the government adds £2 - up to £2,000 per child per year. Use it for nurseries, childminders, and after-school clubs.

Universal Credit

You could get up to 85% of childcare costs reimbursed. Ask your work coach about the Flexible Support Fund for help with upfront costs.

Extra support

- Free job clubs and employment advisers
- Training and skills programmes
- Help with budgeting and childcare

Returning to work is a big step, but you don't have to do it alone. Visit childcarechoices.gov.uk or speak to your local Jobcentre.

Help is available



Teen takeover:

Respect isn't just a word – it's a skill we're learning

We recently ran a workshop for the young people at Hillside Youth Club, inspired by White Ribbon - a campaign which aims to end violence against women and promote respectful relationships.

It wasn't just about facts; it was about recognising behaviours we see every day and asking, "Is that okay?"

We talked about how abuse isn't always physical. It can be someone constantly checking your phone, telling you who you can talk to, or making you feel guilty for spending time with friends.

These are signs of control, and they're not always easy to spot. We also learned what healthy relationships look like: setting boundaries, listening without interrupting, and respecting each other's space.

One example that stuck out to the teens was how saying "no" should always be enough - no explanations needed.

The session gave young people space to ask questions and reflect.

"It teaches us how not to behave"

"It helps us build healthier relationships with partners in our lives."

Workshops like this help us build safer relationships - not just romantic ones, but with friends, family, and even ourselves.



Learn more about our youth clubs at pyc.com/youth or about White Ribbon at whiteribbon.org.uk



HAF A CRACKING HOLIDAY SEASON!

HAF FUN POMPEY'S WINTER PROGRAMME IS BACK!

And it's bringing all the bells and baubles to keep your five-to-16-year-olds entertained during the winter school holidays.



Not heard of HAF Fun Pompey? No problem!

Here's some commonly asked questions and answers for you to unwrap...

What is HAF?



It stands for Holiday Activities and Food. It's a programme that provides free activities and delicious food during the Easter, summer and winter holidays.

What's included in a HAF session?

Each session lasts at least four hours and includes at least one hour of physical activity - like arts, sports, drama and more, plus a delicious hot meal.

Do I have to pay?

No! HAF places are completely free for eligible children. If your child isn't eligible for HAF, some providers offer pay-as-you-go spaces too.

Can I leave my child at the HAF activity?

Yes! All HAF clubs meet council and Department for Education (DfE) standards for safeguarding, insurance and health and safety.

Who can attend HAF?

Children in Year 3 or above who get free school meals can attend for free. If your child is in Reception to Year 2, you need to be on certain benefits to be eligible. Check now by searching 'free school meals' on **portsmouth.gov.uk**.

How do I book a place?

If you live in Portsmouth, search **pypportsmouth.co.uk** and click 'HAF'. If you live outside of Portsmouth, search 'HAF' on your local council website.

What if my child has special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)?

Many HAF clubs are inclusive and offer different levels of support depending on your child's need. There are also dedicated SEND providers for more specialist care.



For more info and to book, click the HAF button on **pypportsmouth.co.uk**

We hope you'll join us for a magical holiday season! Outside of Portsmouth? Go to **hants.gov.uk/haf**