

InTouch

Issue 50 Spring 2022

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WELCOME

Spring has finally sprung. So, this edition of In Touch is rightly full of colour as we look towards warmer months.

It has been a long winter for many of us. But at last, we can say with a degree of confidence, that the worst of the coronavirus pandemic is behind us.

While we should all remain cautious, our newly returned freedoms will undoubtedly be more appreciated than ever before.

In this edition, we catch up with a Plymouth legend, artist Brian Pollard, who's iconic paintings of Plymouth's waterfront, have helped put our city firmly on the tourist trail. In our Plymspirational interview, he recalls his years painting and the fascinating history of our ocean city.

If your New Year's resolution to get fit and healthy didn't quite take off, then not to worry. We catch up with a fitness service that is now permanently based at the Beacon in North Prospect. C&J Fitness have made some transformational changes to their clients' health and fitness.

We delve into the work PCH did to prepare for Storm Eunice, and how our teams acted fast, to keep residents safe and repair the damage.

We have more from the Skills Launchpad, an innovative careers service that we featured in our last edition. This time, you can learn all about the exciting opportunities available to work in healthcare.

We are aware of the impact of the rising cost of living. And we have advice on how to contact us if you're struggling with bills or rent. We're always here to talk.

And last but by no means least, we catch up with a superstar PCH resident who has been named as one of Plymouth's most inspiring women.



Nick

Nick Lewis, Chair of the Board

78 NEW HOMES IN BARNE BARTON

PCH have completed the purchase of 78 homes in Barne Barton from Sovereign Housing Association this week.

This means PCH has taken ownership of 18 two bed flats, 43 two-bed houses and 17 three-bed houses in Kelly Close, Berthon Road and Savage Road to add to our existing homes in Plymouth.

Nick Jackson, Director of Business Services and Development, said: "We are looking forward to welcoming those living in Barne Barton to PCH and we are wasting no time in visiting our new tenants. We want to make a good first impression and by doing face-to-face homes visits within the first few weeks, we are showing people we are a proactive, caring, local landlord who looks out for the safety and wellbeing of our residents."

Before the sale was agreed, residents living in the properties were provided with information to explain the reasons why Sovereign was considering the sale before a six-week consultation took place.

During the consultation PCH and Sovereign arranged a joint drop-in session for residents to enable those with questions to ask them face-to-face and meet with representatives of both housing associations.

Mr Jackson continues: "As a sector, we are committed to improving the lives of our residents by providing quality housing and excellent services. Sometimes that means thinking differently about how we work and this transfer of homes in Barne Barton is testament to that commitment - as two Housing Associations work together with residents, for the benefit of residents."

"From a PCH perspective, this is a fantastic opportunity to provide an unrivalled level of service to more residents in Plymouth and increase the number of homes we own. Whilst we are expanding beyond the city boundaries into surrounding areas in the South West, we also want to continue to increase the number of homes we own on our doorstep because we are an organisation committed to Plymouth and its people. We're looking forward to showing our new Barne Barton residents the benefits of having a high performing, local landlord that is committed to tenant involvement, locally delivered services and investing in Plymouth as a city and in the wider travel to work area."

Helen Hann, Regional Director of Housing for Sovereign, said: "We were pleased to be able to work with PCH - with additional support from the specialist Housing Consultancy team at Faithorn Farrell Timms LLP - to complete the transfer smoothly. We wish all the residents the very best for the future."

The addition of 78 homes to PCH's existing housing stock brings the total number of owned properties to 14,360 in Plymouth and the wider travel to work area.

PCH's ambition is to grow by building and buying homes in Plymouth and the surrounding areas to ensure that more social and affordable homes are available for future generations in the region.



Where there's a wilt, there's a way

PCH'S plan to save trees from disease

Before the coronavirus pandemic struck, you may remember hearing about a disease that infects trees called ash dieback.

While our attention was focused on preventing the spread of Covid-19, another virus was attacking ash trees across the country.

Ash dieback is a fungus that originated overseas. Despite warnings, the virus managed to reach the UK through imported timber since the early 2000's. Sadly, the disease was already widespread in Devon trees by last spring.

Many woodlands will be damaged by the arrival of the unwelcome virus. Depending on how many ash trees are in a forest, will determine how severe the impact will be on a number of beauty spots, forests and nature reserves.

Scientists estimate that around 70 - 80% of the country's ash trees will be killed by the virus. The species makes up for a substantial proportion of our entire tree coverage across the country. Some Ash trees can live for up to 500 years and all trees provide an essential habitat for wildlife.

Many landowners have simply cut trees down once they show symptoms. After a tree becomes infected, it can increase the risk of branches falling and injuring people, so chopping the trees down is often the first resort.

But PCH won't let trees on its land go down without a fight. There are around 150 Ash trees under the care of PCH. Our environment teams are working to explore all options before reaching for the chainsaw.

As a qualified arboriculturist, PCH'S Joe Berryman has knowledge about the fungus and can spot signs of infection. He believes there is hope to save some of the infected trees. He explained: "Scientists are confident that some trees will have genetic immunity. Such immunity has already been discovered within the UK's Ash population, and there is confidence that these trees can be propagated and planted as resistant specimens. They are working hard to find those immune trees and see how they become resistant to the virus so we can learn more."

PCH Ranger Mark Fuller has seen the damage the disease can do first-hand. He said: "We took around six trees down in Wyoming Close recently. But luckily, we turned one tree on its side and made it into a garden bench for people to come and enjoy."



Mark explained that the symptoms of ash dieback were very distinctive. He said: "When the trees are in leaf in the summer, you can see that the tops are thinning out. To compensate, the trees grow straight-up vertically to try and get more sunlight. This can make the branches very weak and likely to snap."

During the summer months, PCH staff will be monitoring the leaves of our ash trees to check for the symptoms and progression of the disease.


"There is a risk of branches falling", added Joe Berryman. "Ash trees have 'brittle timber characteristics', so they are very prone to branches collapsing and injuring people. We will preserve trees where possible, we can manage the risk while still retaining the many benefits ash trees provide with 955 species associated with ash, of which 45 have been found 'only' to exist on this species of tree."

As with many things in nature, even the death of trees provides a resource for other creatures.


Joe explained: "Our trees are scattered throughout the city and we're not felling most of them at this stage, we're surveying them when they come into leaf in the summer, we monitor them for symptoms and keep track of the progression of the disease."

There are buds of hope for some of the ash trees on PCH land, "some of our trees", said Joe "are showing resistance."

Additionally, PCH has joined Plymouth's Tree Management Plan, a city-wide partnership, which aims to help trees in urban areas become resilient to the challenges of climate change and disease.



HOW PCH PREPARED FOR STORMY WEATHER



All hands were on deck in February as PCH braced itself for a series of storms that battered the UK.

Severe weather warnings from the Met Office meant that staff had to act fast and take drastic action to prepare for dangerous gale force winds.

Two storms hit the UK in quick succession, Storm Dudley, followed by Storm Eunice.

Roof tiles were blown off at Keat Street in Devonport, and many properties saw fences blown over or damaged. As the city prepared for even more wild weather. Our contact centre was extremely busy as residents reported many cases of storm damage.

Over that February weekend, phone lines in the PCH contact centre received 2,196 phone calls. According to those manning the phones, the majority of calls were reports of storm damage.

Extra hands were drafted in as call operators, Mark Boyd and Laura Vince volunteered for overtime.

Staff working over the weekend had to prioritise emergency calls over less urgent repairs. On one day alone, 70 calls for emergencies came in and had to be prioritised to keep residents safe.

Ben Rose, Contact Centre Manager said: "All our teams did an outstanding job both in the days leading up to the storms and throughout them to help protect residents, properties, and buildings across Plymouth."

"The efforts from the team were incredible, even stepping-in on the weekend to speak with our residents, taking well over 2,000 inbound calls during some of the worst storm conditions we've seen in many years. Thanks to a lot of dedication, hard work and care, they were able to keep our residents safe, protect properties and potentially save lives."

He added: "I could not be prouder to be part of the contact centre PCH team, watching the focus, care and dedication shown to support the people of Plymouth."

After the high winds subsided, much of the damage became clear. However, not all the storm damage was immediately obvious. PCH's tree specialist, Joe Berryman, had to inspect some trees to check for branches that could have posed a danger. Damaged branches could pose a future risk, especially if more bad weather were to be on the horizon. A branch could easily snap and fall to the ground if not identified and dealt with.

Joe explained: "With some large and old trees, it's recommended they are inspected following a storm, to check for any signs of new structural risk features."

"I was out surveying a small, wooded patch recently, which took quite a beating from the storms. The trees that withstood storm Eunice needed to be checked for signs that indicate they are now a safety concern, or will become one in the near future."

Ian Frazer, from the neighbourhood management team was thrilled with the efforts made by staff. He said: "I am always impressed and proud how all of the PCH teams, both office based and, on the frontline, come together and provide excellent services at a time of crisis."

"During the storms everyone was calm and professional and there was a willingness to work additional hours to help our residents. I would also like to thank our customers for their patience and understanding not only during the storms but also in relation to the timescales to complete permanent repairs."

Scientists predict that extreme weather events such as those seen in February could become more frequent due to climate change. With this in mind, it's important to talk to us and let us know if your property may have been damaged.



CRAFT GROUP IS "KNITTING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER"



A popular craft group held at the Devonport Towers is open to anyone wanting to attend.

Whether you want to learn a new craft, or practice one of your own, the door is open to everyone, not just PCH residents. There are even free refreshments on offer for any crafty guests who want to pop along.

Communities Worker, Hayley Kemp said: "Everyone is welcome to come along to our group, not just Devonport residents."


"People already come from across the city. You don't need to be an expert in your particular craft and we're a friendly bunch too!"

"We do everything from knitting and crochet to diamond art and colouring. It's a safe space to get together and enjoy yourself."

Hayley added: "We're literally knitting the community together!"

The group is held on Tuesdays from 12 - 2pm.

If you have any questions, you can contact Hayley Kemp on 07557 009229, or email: hayley.kemp@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk



PCH RETAILER SPOTTED ON TV

Eagle-eyed viewers of ITV Westcountry News may have spotted a familiar face on their televisions recently.

Superstar-retailer and commercial PCH tenant Leah Hara of Plym Hair and Extensions, was interviewed by ITV News about reopening retail, and the impact felt by traders from the lockdown.

Little did ITV know they were only about six months behind In Touch, who caught up with Leah in our autumn edition last year.

Leah was asked what could be done to tempt people back to the high street. Plym Hair and

Extensions specialise in European and Afro hair products and services.

She spoke about the efforts being made to lure shoppers back, including some works from PCH such as a beautiful mural commissioned in Colin Campbell Court by a local artist.

"The news feature was all about people coming together to welcome shoppers back", said Leah. "Obviously some businesses have struggled throughout the last 18 months, but the community has really come together in lots of ways."

Leah's business has gone from strength to strength during the most challenging period for retail traders.

She added: "We want to show customers that we can offer something different to online sellers and look forward to welcoming more people back to the high street."





NEW FITNESS SERVICE MOVES INTO THE BEACON

If your New Year's resolution to get fit and healthy didn't quite go to plan, then you could be in luck.

A new body transformation fitness service has moved into The Beacon, and the team are looking forward to welcoming locals who want to improve their health and fitness.

C&J Fitness have officially held their first group sessions at their new home on The Beacon's ground floor, just next to the main entrance to the café. The business has moved over from a former site in St Budeaux, where they have many happy clients.

C&J Fitness specialise in body transformation through group sessions. Guests are initially welcomed with an 8-week intensive work-out course, where weight loss can be achieved and maintained too, as many clients choose to extend their subscription.

Those signing up are given one-to-one tuition, advised on their diet and calorie intake, and given targets to aid their weight loss journey with advice and support along the way.

The company was founded by fitness fanatics, Chey Bryce and Jake Miller. Since launching their service in 2019, they have helped hundreds of clients get into shape, with some impressive testimonials.

Co-owner of the business, Chey, was thrilled to open the doors for the first time. He said: "We're very excited to be setting up in this area for people to come and train, become fitter and stronger."

"I'm from the North Prospect area having been brought up around these parts my whole teenage and young adult life.

"I'm excited to be bringing our high-quality service to the people of this community."

He added: "I really do hope the community will benefit from the services that we offer and look forward to welcoming them."

The group holds sessions throughout the week for anyone to get in shape. For more information on prices and times, you can visit their social media pages, or head down to The Beacon to see for yourself.

Jake Miller said: "Whether you're looking for a little bit of help or a lot, we'd encourage anyone who's looking to make a positive change to their health to message us either through our Facebook page @C&J Fitness or via our Instagram @CJ_Fitness10 to see what we can do for them."

SEE IT, REPORT IT!

COMMUNITY EFFORT IS THE KEY TO ENDING FLY-TIPPING

Every year PCH spends over £200,000 on clearing up after selfish fly-tippers. Plymouth City Council too, dedicates vast resources to cleaning up rubbish that has been dumped on their land or in public.

We want to encourage our residents to be proactive and report fly-tipping whenever they see it. This applies to all our properties but there are particular problem spots when it comes to fly-tipping, and we want to see those doing it punished.

Rogue traders and lazy members of the public have continued to dump their rubbish in your community. Vauxhall street, Vauxhall Court, Buckwell street, and Woolster Court in the Barbican area have been particularly frequent spots.

We think it's time we let the fly-tippers know: enough is enough!

We encourage the PCH community to keep eyes peeled and always report fly-tipping as soon as it's been spotted.

Residents can play an active role by being vigilant and letting us know soon as they see it. Writing down the registration plate number of a vehicle committing the act, also, can allow the council to pursue offenders and issue them with hefty fines in court.

Rubbish dumped in your area can be a serious health hazard. It can be unhygienic or even be a fire hazard.

Angie Irving, Housing Officer in the Barbican area, said: "Fly-tipping is more than just annoying, it can pose a health risk and ruin the environment for everyone.

"We really want to encourage the community to work together on preventing the rubbish from being dumped. We are working with the city council who also want the message to be loud and clear, there is zero tolerance for anyone dumping rubbish, and you could risk a hefty fine."

She added: "If the community can be on the lookout, I'm confident we can stop any more fly-tipping in the Barbican area."

If you see anyone fly-tipping remember to report it by calling us on: 0808 230 6500.

Artist Brian Pollard is famous for his colourful paintings of Plymouth's waterfront. His unique and playful style often features Smeaton's Tower and Plymouth Sound, among lots of other beauty spots in the Southwest.

Brian's paintings are familiar to many Plymothians. His colourful works can often be seen decorating the windows of galleries and shopfronts on the Barbican, but his work has far broader appeal than just Plymouth.

From Brian's garden-studio, an uninterrupted view of the shoreline and horizon can be seen as he sketches his latest work. "You're not allowed to photograph this one" he said. "This is a surprise gift for a friend."

The artist moved to Plymouth from the Birmingham in 1977. After qualifying as a medical doctor, he worked as a GP in an inner-city NHS Practice for 30 years.

For Brian, the highly stressful environment of medicine forged a direct path to taking up painting as a hobby. The relaxation of getting lost in an image offered a form of stress relief, something to take his mind off work. "The process of painting is very relaxing", he said. "You really focus on what you're doing, in the moment."

Brian added that his paintings being so bright and colourful were also a factor in cheering him up whenever he got the brushes out.

His GP surgery would play an unexpected role in his artistic success. "I used to hang up my pictures in the waiting room of my surgery", Brian explained. "One of my patients was a gallery owner and he quite took to them, that's how they got into a gallery in the first place."

He added: "I put my work in galleries by invitation only. I wrote to a gallery once and they were so rude to me it could put you off painting for the rest of your life."

Eventually, he was asked to exhibit his work in a gallery in London. A friend of Brian's ran a hotel, which had its own in-house art gallery. The exhibition caught the eye of an art critic for national newspaper, the Mail on Sunday.

Brian said: "I held an exhibition there and that's when things really changed. After the art critic from the Mail on Sunday reviewed the display – tickets sold out in about 45 minutes."

Luckily the review was very favourable of his work. "It wasn't considered 'great art', but he recognised that people really liked it and suggested that you should come and see my work to cheer up your day."

He continued: "The same critic then came down to Plymouth and reviewed an exhibition I held here, which was astonishing. That's when I started getting national attention."

After some success, Brian wanted to focus on inspiring others to pick up the paint brush. He has worked extensively with schools across Plymouth, visiting almost every primary school in the city, in the hope of igniting a

passion for paint. He said: "You either hate this sort of art, or you love it. But either way, it attracts people. It's why I visit children in schools, it gets people involved."

"I take children out on the waterfront and show them in real life. It's quite surprising, some children in the city have never been out on the Hoe before."

According to Brian, one of the best things about being involved in community projects is being invited to places you would normally never go. A stark difference to his career as a GP, he says. One particular event that comes to mind was the auctioning of Plymouth's Elmer the Elephant sculptures, the very first one of which was designed by him. The elephant sculptures were placed throughout the city and auctioned off to raise money for St Luke's Hospice.

Brian is full of stories and interesting tales about Plymouth. It was in the city that he met David McKee, the creator of the enormously popular Mr Ben books, which were turned into the children's television show. As it transpires, the inspiration for Mr Ben came from a shop in Ebrington Street in the city centre. The author of Mr Ben once visited a store there, where the owner would appear "like magic" but seemed rather irritated by the idea of actually selling anything. This would form the basis of the fancy dress shop, featured in the story.

Brian even had a piece of music composed for schoolchildren to sing for the launch of the Elmer the Elephant auction. He arranged for Duncan Lamont, a jazz saxophonist, who became famous for writing the music for the Mr Ben cartoon. Sadly, on his way to hear the music performed for the first time, Duncan suffered a heart attack and passed away at Derriford Hospital.

Brian sees the city as a great place for budding artists with a very bright future. The re-opening and development of Drake's Island is a particularly welcome change. "I never painted Drake's Island", said Brian, in protest. "The island used to be used for children to go and visit for canoeing, climbing and all sorts of activities. So, I said until it's returned to that, I will not paint it."

Now, Drake's Islands has a new owner, who has welcomed classes of schoolchildren to visit once again and has plans to build a hotel on the island. Brian now happily draws the Island in his paintings. Some of which can be spotted in his most recent works.

The history of the island, and of Plymouth generally is of particular fascination for the artist. Charles Darwin, Lawrence of Arabia, and even Napoleon, just a few of the historic names to have visited Plymouth Sound. But it's the landscape that is the foremost inspiration for his work: "We're sandwiched between the Moors and the Sea and right next to Cornwall. What more could you ask for? The two most beautiful counties in the country!"

"I think the city still has much more potential to be realised. Things happen slowly and sometimes people are reluctant to spend money on arts and cultural things which is understandable, but I think that is changing."



"Plymouth has the most astonishing history"

PLYMspirational

For any budding artists, Brian has some simple advice. If you want to paint in a realistic style, then you ought to try some lessons, but if you are looking to paint in the 'naïve' style as he calls it, then you just have to paint on a regular basis.

"My art . . . people say 'it's the Hoe' because it has water and a lighthouse but in reality, it isn't anything like what the Hoe looks like. There's lots of stuff missing, because it's either too complicated or it doesn't fit-in. When you're not trying to achieve something that looks photographic, that's what you're trying to do."

"Art is all about observation, looking at things very, very carefully."

Without doubt, this is something that the people of Plymouth hope he continues to do, for a long time to come.

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE CHANGES

WE HAVE WRITTEN TO RESIDENTS TO LET YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES WILL BE FROM THIS MONTH.

We have written to residents to let you know what your rents and service charges will be from this month.

Our tenants get excellent value for money. Most of the social rents we charge are lower than other housing associations in Plymouth and they are also amongst the lowest in England (on average we have the fourth lowest social rents).

The majority of our rents are at least 40% lower than it would be to rent the same property from a private landlord.

Some of our tenants pay affordable rent which can be between 20% to 30% lower than if rented privately.

Because we are a social landlord, we do not pass profits to shareholders so money from rents is invested into looking after homes, estates and communities for our existing tenants, and building more homes for future residents.

HOW WE SET OUR SOCIAL RENTS

We set our social rents using a formula from the Government, which allows us to increase social rents using the Consumer Prices inflation index, plus 1%.

Any service charges are in addition to the social rent. They are set to cover costs and not make a profit. Therefore they can go up or down each year depending on what we estimate the cost of providing the services will be. This includes any

adjustment to reflect the actual cost of services from previous years compared to what we estimated those costs would be.

RENTS THIS YEAR

Like many businesses and households, we have experienced a significant increase in costs over the past year and these are set to continue rising next year. This means it is more expensive for us to repair, improve and manage our homes. The rents paid by our residents help us meet these costs.

We set our rents using a Government formula, which allows increases of inflation+1% (using the September CPI inflation rate at 3.1%). So this year the majority of tenants will see a 4.1% increase in rent. This applies to anyone paying social rent or living in home built in the last 10 years.

Shared Ownership residents and most customers who rent garages and parking spaces will also see a 4.1% increase in rents. This is only the third time we have increased our rents since 2016 and means in real terms, our tenants will be paying on average just £4 per week more from April 2022 when compared with their rent from 7 years ago.

Tenants living in homes built more than 10 years ago paying affordable rents will see a decrease of up to 7% to help reduce the difference between our affordable and social rents on older homes.

To make sure our homes are more affordable,

this year we have decided to limit all our general needs rents, for affordable rents and social rents plus service charges, so they do not go above the LHA (Local Housing Allowance). These rates are set by the Government to limit the level of housing benefit or housing allowance as part of Universal Credit paid for rents to private landlords. Although PCH does not need to do this, we have chosen to adopt the LHA rates as it helps make sure our homes are more affordable for all. Only a small number of our tenants in homes built in the last 10 years are affected by this decision, as rents for these properties are generally higher, and they will see a smaller rent increase than other tenants and, in some cases, a reduction in rent.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT CHANGES ARE BEING MADE TO MY RENT?

All tenants will get a letter explaining their rent and service charges and what the changes mean for them.

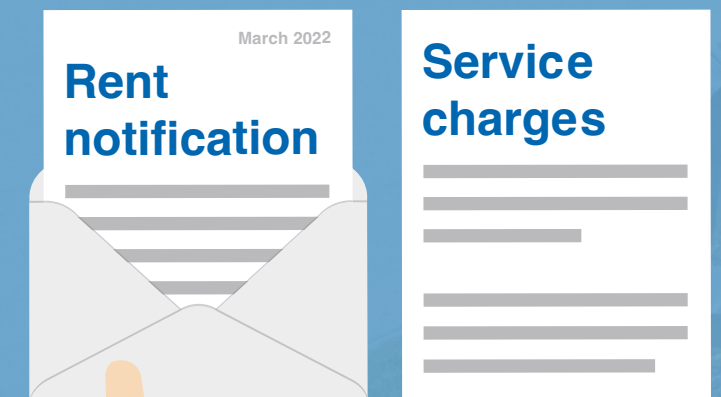
SERVICE CHARGES

If you pay a service charge, it will be shown in your rent letter along with any changes to the amount you will be asked to pay for the coming year. You are very likely to see an increase in your service charge this year, as the cost of utilities such as water, gas and electric have risen nationally. This is a situation most households across the country are facing and we will be sharing advice about where to turn to for financial support if you need it.

RENTS INVESTED BACK INTO PLYMOUTH AND SURROUNDING AREAS

We know that any change in household finances can be difficult. Your rent helps us to keep homes in good repair, make necessary improvements and build more affordable homes, so that we can meet the needs of local people both now and in the future. We know that your home is important to you and we make sure that your rent goes back into providing good quality affordable housing and supporting the communities where we work. That's the difference we make as a landlord – we give back to help residents already living in our homes and future residents.

More information and useful animations are available on our website.



Your feedback on the standard of PCH's new-build homes

PCH strive to offer the best standards possible, whilst still achieving value for money. The Development Team wanted to investigate how PCH residents rated certain elements of a new build home to achieve feedback on value and importance.

To do this we ran a survey, a focus group, and an engagement activity at the 2021 Resident Design Conference, where we asked residents to rank the elements within different budgets and types of property.

In the consultation there seemed to be less considered importance for lighting and multi-media aspects as opposed to flooring, lockable sheds and mixer taps. Interestingly, different age groups also showed slight variations in preference which may be worth considering re different types of properties.

The feedback was used to enable project managers to make value for money and delivery decisions regarding new build homes in the future. For more information on consultations and feedback reports please visit our website and search 'consultations'.

Resident Specification Scores by Priority	Rank Score (low score higher priority)
Vinyl flooring throughout the property (entire property for flats, ground floor for houses)	1
Mixer taps on the kitchen sink (replacing separate hot & cold taps)	2
A lockable shed or storage unit	3
Multi-media plate in the lounge	4
1.5 bowl sinks (replacing single bowls enabling the easy disposal of practical waste)	5
USB points within wall sockets	6
Easy clean upstands behind cooker (replacing tiles)	7
Mixer taps on the bath, and bathroom/cloakroom sinks	8
LED spotlights in the kitchen (replacing pendant lights)	9
LED spotlights in the bathrooms & cloakrooms (replacing pendant lights)	10



SO Living mark a milestone with 300 shared ownership sales

The sales team at Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) are celebrating a sales achievement after handing over their 300th set of keys to their latest shared ownership customer.

SO Living sell PCH's shared ownership homes across our developments, enabling customers to purchase a share of their home and pay rent on the remaining share.

Shared ownership is more affordable than buying on the open market as shared owners will only need a deposit for the share they're purchasing. They can also purchase more shares and "staircase" to 100% home ownership.

The first shared ownership home was sold in the summer of 2012 at the first phase of re-development in North Prospect when the team consisted of only three members.

SO Living has since grown to eight members to support PCH's expanding development programme across Plymouth and the surrounding areas in Devon and Cornwall, helping many first-time buyers, families and downsizers get their foot on the property ladder.

The 300th home was recently sold in Sherford to where a selection of 2-bedroom apartments were available for purchase.

Tracey White, Sales and Marketing Manager at PCH, said: "Reaching 300 shared ownership home sales for PCH, through the SO Living sales brand, is an amazing milestone. Since 2012, we have provided much needed affordable homes to the residents of Plymouth and the surrounding areas in Devon and Cornwall.

"The demand for shared ownership homes remains strong as an affordable and achievable route for many customers, helping make their dream of home ownership a reality.

"PCH cares about its residents and communities and SO Living is a recognisable brand that our customers trust. This achievement would not have been possible without the sales team which has grown over the years, providing excellent care and support to our customers."

More shared ownership homes will be available soon in Woolwell, Callington, Pensilva and Saltash. Visit the SO Living website for more information.

Appley ever after

Always apples gets to the core of the community

A fruity initiative which is partly funded by PCH has announced it has big plans for 2022, as the team look back on a fun-filled 12 months.

All Ways Apples was the creation of the Food Plymouth team, who have worked extremely hard to ensure that their neighbourhood events went ahead, regardless of the challenges posed by the coronavirus restrictions.

Building on the success of the 'On Tour' micro events in 2020, the group visited even more communities this year. Activities included tree care, harvesting, juicing and pasteurising.

Much of the freshly pressed apple juice was enjoyed at the events, directly from the apple press.

Fruit was harvested from all across the city and shared widely. The group worked with orchard volunteers, encouraging new people to get involved.

The team hope that in 2022 they will be able to return to Devonport for the main event, All Ways Apples Festival, while continuing to build community capacity through the group's 'On Tour' activities.

One of the organisers, Tess Wilmot said: "For the last two years we have been unable to do the big All Ways Apples Festival at Devonport Guildhall due to Covid.

"So we took All Ways Apples on tour to visit as many community orchards as we could and share the abundance!

"We love it when residents get involved with the pressing and show us their community growing spaces."

Between September 2020 and December 2021, the All Ways Apples team took part in 24 community apple events which included harvesting apples grown across the city and creating over 600 bottles of juice to be enjoyed by participants. Extra bottles were donated to community groups and food banks.

If you would like to get involved or attend a future event, please email: digfordevonport@hotmail.co.uk – or call: 07531 506481



Our services at a glance

Service as normal



All repairs, safety checks and maintenance works



Laundries remain open



Any routine in person home visits can take place



Allocations, lettings, mutual exchanges and sales continue



Plumer House is open with restrictions in place

Services with some changes



Flytipping removal and clearances



Outdoor playgrounds remain open



Community activities with face coverings and reduced social contact



Resident-led events can go ahead with measures in place



Outdoor environmental services



The Beacon is open to the public



Housing, Leasehold and Income Officer visits



Communal lounges in sheltered housing schemes are open with some restrictions in place



Stairwell cleaning



Community rooms are open



Beacon café is fully open



Our City Centre shop is available by appointment

MAKE A DIFFERENCE Join Health and Care

Care Assistant

Domiciliary
Care Assistant

Support
Worker

Admin

Catering

Domestic

Over 150
employers
contracted by
Plymouth City
Council

15.5% of
Plymouth's jobs
are in Health
and Care

Looking for a job with hours to suit you?
There are 100s of full-time, part-time and flexible
job vacancies available in the city today!

www.skillslaunchpadplym.co.uk

In partnership with:



CONNECTING LOCAL PEOPLE WITH SKILLS, TRAINING, EDUCATION, JOBS AND CAREERS IN HEALTH AND CARE

Health and Care is Plymouth's fastest growing sector, currently employing 16,500 full time equivalent jobs which is 15.5% of Plymouth's overall employment. The city offers a huge range of career pathways with 100s of jobs available today – both clinical and non-clinical, where local people can make a massive difference to someone's life.

**Looking for a job with hours to suit you?
Want to make a difference to the lives of others?**

If you're passionate about helping people, joining the Health and Care sector can be one of the most rewarding and fulfilling job choices there is and whatever your skill set, there is a career path to suit you. You don't necessarily need qualifications or previous work experience. What's important are your core skills and values, and your attitude towards working with people who need care.

The city is working together to recruit an army of care assistants, domiciliary care assistants and support workers to boost frontline care services. There are also a wide range of opportunities for cleaners, chefs, catering assistants, security staff, administration staff, gardeners, porters and other support roles.

Interested in joining the health and care sector, Skills Launchpad Plymouth offers you FREE:

- access to impartial careers information, advice and guidance
- a 1:1 face to face skills assessment to identify your transferrable skills and values based behaviours to help you more confidently apply for jobs in health and care
- help to job search and prepare for interview in a health care setting, with introductions to local employers
- the opportunity to gain entry level health and care skills to build confidence
- work experience and volunteering opportunities
- advice to overcome barriers to starting work including access to financial support for work clothing, initial travel to work costs as well as guidance on benefits calculations
- access to ongoing training and skills development once you get started to continue up-skilling and developing your career in health and care

Meet Jack and Keely

The city's new dedicated Health and Care Coordinators, Jack Davies and Keely Burch-Havers (pictured) are here to help you find your perfect job.

Jack has a wealth of knowledge and experiences developed in a wide range of Health & Care settings, from working in maternity care to dementia care in both residential and nursing environments, as well as his time working in post 16 education, where he was involved in the teaching and assessing learners studying Health and Social Care.

"I am passionate about ensuring individuals are fully equipped with the skills and knowledge to prepare them for the sector and the challenges within it".

Keely has worked in the health and care sector for 30 years. Her experience ranges from leadership roles within nursery and children centres to managing residential care for those with complex needs and dementia care, as well as community project management. Most recently, Keely has been working in post-16 education and teaching university-level provision.

"A role in health and care can effect positive change and advance outcomes for both staff and service users".

Local people are invited to drop in to meet Jack and Keely every Thursday at the pop up Health and Care Job Shop, 12noon-2pm at Skills Launchpad Plymouth, hosted by Barclay's Bank on Armada Way in the city centre. The team are also regularly working from the local job centres at Old Tree Court on Exeter Street, Bretonside and Devonport. JCP Work coaches can book appointments or just pop by to access this free impartial help and support.

Visit www.skillslaunchpadplym.co.uk to find out more. Follow on social media to keep up with all the latest news and events:
Instagram and Facebook @SkillsLaunchpadPlymouth
Twitter @LaunchpadPlym



Struggling financially?

If you're struggling to find the money to cover your rent, the most important thing is to let us know.

Due to an increase in the cost of living, having to stretch money further is something nearly everyone is having to do. So if this sounds familiar, you're certainly not alone.

At PCH, we will always aim to work with you, if you fall behind on your rent payments, before taking any kind of further action.

We are always here to talk if you're struggling to find the money for your rent or service charge.

We have dedicated staff who are waiting to help you. They can assist with benefits, recommend local charities and offer helpful advice on financial matters.

Please call us on: 0800 028 0350 if you need help with your rent or service charges.



PCH resident heralded as inspirational



A PCH resident has been named as one of Plymouth's most inspiring women.

Maggi Williamson from Whitleigh, has been recognised for her tireless work in assisting local charities.

A list of 73 of - the most incredible women making us proud to be from Plymouth - was compiled to celebrate International Women's Day, by news website, Plymouth Live.

For years, Maggi has worked closely with charity Hope for the Homeless, who serve meals to those in need. She has also worked towards providing much needed essentials at the Garage Café, just off Union Street. She has been a vital source of fundraising for them, to keep people in desperate need from going hungry.

"I was very surprised to see myself on the list", said Maggi. "I was told by a friend and hadn't even spotted it until she alerted me. I won an award from The Plymouth Herald in 2019, so at first, I thought she must have been talking about that, but it was something else altogether."

"It was a very nice surprise though!" A friend who spoke to Plymouth Live said that Maggi tirelessly sells items to raise money for charities who are very grateful for the help.

Staff at Hope for the Homeless described her as having a huge heart, who always puts others first.



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WELCOME ABOARD,

JOANNE AND GAYNOR!

HERE AT PCH, WE'RE EXCITED TO WELCOME TWO NEW MEMBERS OF THE CUSTOMER FOCUS COMMITTEE (CFC)

The committee was created to give residents a voice and guide PCH into making the best possible choices for residents.

Here, they tell us why getting involved is so important to them, and what they both hope to bring to their new roles.

JOANNE BOWDEN

For years I worked in the construction trade during the 1980's and 90's, when it was difficult for a woman to progress in such a male dominated environment.

After my construction career, I then went for a drastic change and followed an interest I had for years. . . I decided to study ancient history at university.

Sadly, I didn't manage to complete my degree course as my partner became unwell and I became their full-time carer.

WHAT WILL YOU BRING TO THE ROLE?

I want to make sure residents have a voice, a friendly face in the form of a fellow resident who can communicate with PCH on their behalf.

I have been involved in lots of PCH groups and committees, such as the Spend and Save group, mystery shopping, Resident Scrutiny and Learn For Free courses.

GAYNOR SOUTHERTON

Originally from Liverpool, I have lived in the southwest for over 40 years, my two daughters were born here. I became a PCH tenant in 2012 when I moved into a Sheltered Housing Scheme.

I was encouraged by a neighbour to get more involved and have, over the years, attended many focus groups, review and interview panels leading to my being accepted into the Scrutiny Steering Group in 2020.

I am now a member of the Customer Focus Committee, and it's good to see how the results of attending all the previous groups had filtered up the line, in some cases to Board level.

WHAT WILL YOU BRING TO THE ROLE?

I have Multiple Sclerosis and being a wheelchair user, accessibility to properties is extremely important to me, together with how people with disabilities of all kinds are treated. I have over the years, had both excellent and extremely bad experiences.

Whilst on occasions I find it challenging, I have never regretted getting involved and encourage others to give it a go. It is good to find out what goes on behind the scenes, you do make a difference and if nothing else, you get to meet some very interesting people.

We will be looking to recruit more residents to the Customer Focus Committee later in the year. If you would like to find out more please do get in touch with the Governance Team on **01752 388480** or email governance@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

How can I make a complaint?



Website form



Social media



By calling



In person



By writing to us

Stage 1 complaints

A member of staff will let you know we have received your complaint within 2 working days. The Officer investigating your complaint will attempt to contact you within 2 working days to introduce themselves and discuss your complaint. A full response to your complaint will be sent in writing within 10 working days.

Is my complaint resolved at this stage?

If you are still dissatisfied, please let us know the reason for this and we will move your complaint to Stage 2 of our complaints process.



Stage 2 complaints

Your complaint will be passed to the Customer Experience Team who will let you know they have received your complaint within 2 working days. A Senior Manager will then review your complaint and provide a further response within 20 working days.

Is my complaint resolved at this stage?

If you are still dissatisfied, please let us know the reason for this and we will move your complaint to our final stage of our complaints process (Stage 3).



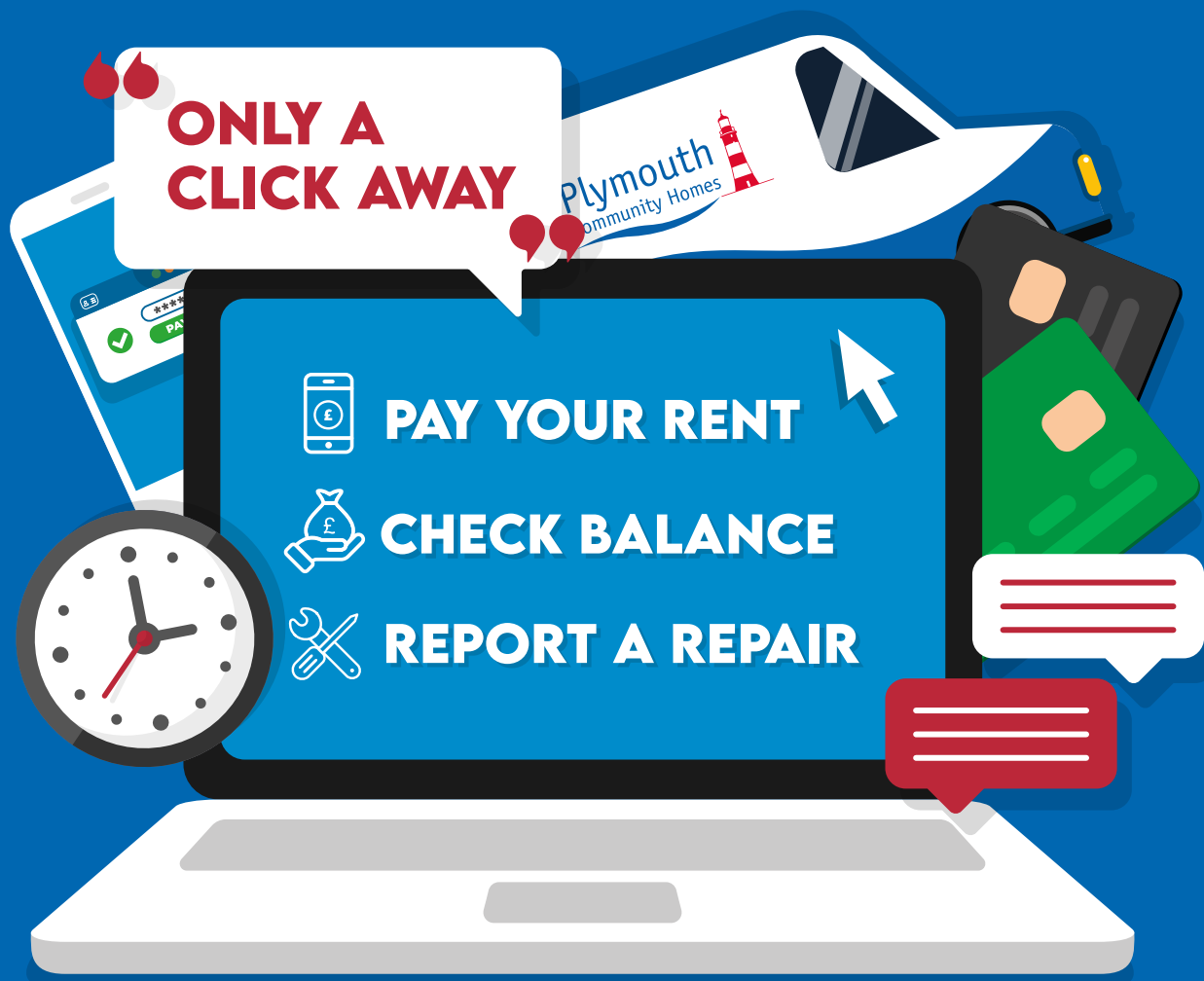
Stage 3 complaints

The Customer Experience Team will let you know they have your Stage 3 complaint, and will prepare a report to send to you. At this point you can ask for additional information. You will then be invited to a review meeting where your complaint will be discussed with a Director and Board Members. We will then send you a response letter with the outcome of the review.

Is my complaint resolved at this stage?

If you are still dissatisfied, your complaint can now be referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service to carry out an independent review.

SIGN UP TO MYPCH



Use MyPCH to quickly and easily check and pay your rent, report a repair and update your contact details anywhere, anytime.

mypch.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

We're always keen to hear what you're up to, so if you'd like to tell us about something we can include in In Touch, we'd love to hear it.

Email news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk.

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