

# InTouch

Issue 61 Spring 2025



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Read InTouch online  
[bit.ly/PCHInTouch](https://bit.ly/PCHInTouch)



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## Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of InTouch

In this edition, we showcase our support for Debt Awareness Week which starts on 17 March 2025, sharing advice and information about debt and how our Financial Inclusion Team can support you. Michelle, Emily, Lisa and Jo, our Financial Inclusion Officers are qualified Debt Advisors and are here to help (pages 4-5).

We're committed to delivering outstanding services for our residents, and to make sure our residents know exactly what they can expect from us, we've developed a new set of Service Standards. They have been put together to ensure our services are fair, equitable and consistent, and recognise the needs of all our residents, with standards covering areas from repairs and anti-social behaviour, to building safety and your tenancy (page 17).

We have recently written to our tenants to let you know what our new rents and service charges will be from April 2025 and more information can be found on pages 8-9. We understand the cost-of-living pressures facing our tenants and we're trying to help our tenants with these challenges as much as we can.

At the end of February, Devonport came alive through Dazzle! Devonport's Festival of Light, Creativity and Heritage, a unique free-to-access festival that took families, residents and visitors on a captivating journey through 200 years of local history. The festival was enjoyed by so many, and if you weren't able to make it, you can take a look back at the spectacle on pages 16-17.

We recently hosted our third cohort of Community Wellbeing Champion Training for our residents in partnership with Livewell Southwest, helping them to develop the knowledge and skills needed to be a Wellbeing Champion within their community. If you'd like to become a Community Wellbeing Champion, there's still time to register your interest. Find out more on page 19.

Read more about this, what we're doing to tackle fly-tipping, an update on our Asset Management Programme and Major Works Investment Programme to refurbish and upgrade our homes and blocks, decarbonising more properties to help reduce energy bills for our residents and information about our free available courses within this edition.

If you have any stories about your achievements, or the good work of your neighbours, we want to hear from you. Contact us on [news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](mailto:news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk) or message us on Facebook, X or Instagram.

We hope you enjoy the magazine,



*Valerie*

**Valerie Lee,  
Chair of the Board**

# Morley Court Residents Dive into Virtual Reality Experience

Tea and Toast goers at Morley Court experienced a unique morning in January as they delved into the ocean's depths with the Ocean Conservation Trust's virtual reality (VR) experience.

Louise and Safa, Ocean Discovery Rangers from the Ocean Conservation Trust led the event, which featured an informative and interactive session. Participants enjoyed a VR tour across various aquatic environments and had the opportunity to examine artefacts such as turtle shells, coral, starfish, and a menacing shark jaw.



**Louise, Ocean Discovery Ranger at Ocean Conservation Trust, explained the focus of these sessions:** "The aim is to connect people to the ocean, immerse them in the beauty of the water, and demonstrate how amazing the ocean is whilst highlighting the issues it now faces.

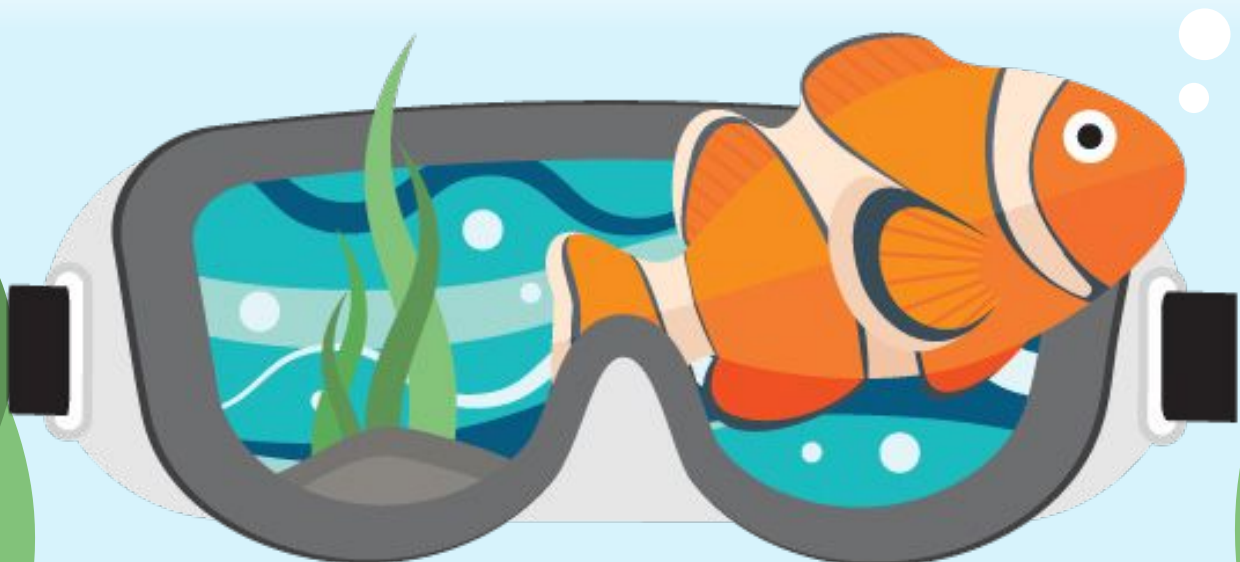
"The event has been delightful, as it's been wonderful to see how engaged people are, and it's amazing to be able to answer so many questions."

The residents' first trip into the ocean featured footage filmed at the National Marine Aquarium shark tank, followed by a deep dive in Plymouth Sound. To conclude the experience, residents explored oceans around the world and immersed themselves in a vibrant variety of exotic waters.

**Joe Loughran, Housing Officer at Plymouth Community Homes commented:** "This project allows us to showcase the potential of digital technology and bring together people who may not have had the opportunity or facilities to experience this before.

"It was an amazing experience for residents; I even had to give it a try myself!"

**One resident was heard saying:** "I enjoyed that so much! It feels like you're really there under the ocean-how brilliant!"



# Debt Awareness Week 2025 & meet our Financial Inclusion Officers

Debt Awareness Week takes place between 17th – 23rd March each year, and this year we are once again supporting the campaign. Within this campaign, we share advice and information about debt and how we can support you.

At Plymouth Community Homes, we have a dedicated team of Financial Inclusion Officers - Michelle, Emily, Lisa and Jo. They work to support our residents with advice and support on managing debt, claiming benefits and budgeting advice. They are qualified Debt Advisors and are here to help.

## What help is available if I am in debt?

The first step is to ask for help and seek support. Help and support is available within our Income Recovery & Financial Inclusion Team who can be contacted on **08000 280350**, where you'll be put in touch with our Financial Inclusion Team.

Our officers are available to visit residents at home or appointments are available at our head office. At your first appointment you will be asked a lot of personal questions around your income and expenditure, but this is so that we can work with you to work out a plan of how best to help you.

Independent and free debt advice is also available from:

- **Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) Plymouth** - 08082 787910. Plymouth CAB also run several advice drop-in services at various locations across the city. Check out their calendar on their website: [www.citizensadviceplymouth.org.uk/events/list](http://www.citizensadviceplymouth.org.uk/events/list)
- **Advice Plymouth** also hold a drop-in Service at Ernest English House. More information about this service can be found on their website: [www.citizensadviceplymouth.org.uk/advice-plymouth](http://www.citizensadviceplymouth.org.uk/advice-plymouth)
- **StepChange** – 08001 381111. Further information can be found on their website: [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)
- **National Debtline** - 08088 084000. Further information can be found on their website: [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)



## I've seen adverts on social media offering help with debts and was considering contacting them. Would you recommend it?

It's great that you are thinking about taking action towards tackling your debt. Often taking that first step is the most difficult.

However, we would not recommend taking advice from companies that are using social media to advertise their services. You may not get the best advice, or the best option to help you tackle your debt. You might find that you will end up paying significant fees to the company, sometimes thousands of pounds.

Instead, make sure that you contact us - or one of the organisations above that are free and independent - so you will not be charged any fees and you will have an assurance they will consider the best option for you.

# PCH retains A+ credit rating and achieves top grade for governance

Plymouth Community Homes has retained its A+ credit rating with a positive outlook – and achieved the highest possible regulatory judgment of G1 for its governance whilst maintaining a V2 grade for its financial viability.

PCH saw its excellent credit rating renewed this month with confirmation published on 20 January by S&P Global after a thorough evaluation of PCH's past financial performance and future plans was carried out, alongside an assessment of the organisation's operational record, governance and financial performance.

It is a significant achievement for any business to achieve, and then maintain, an A+ credit rating, especially with an accompanying outlook of 'positive', and shows that PCH's solid business approach makes us an attractive option for investors.

The news follows an announcement in January from the Government's Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) confirming PCH has again retained the highest possible regulatory judgement of G1 for its governance, and retained its V2 grade for financial viability, showing that the business is stable, reliable and dependable for its investors and for tenants.

The Regulatory Judgement was published on the RSH website.

**Nick Jackson, Executive Director of Business Services and Development at PCH, said:** "This is a fantastic result, especially given the ongoing economic challenges facing businesses in the housing sector."

**Jonathan Cowie, Chief Executive of PCH, added:** "To achieve an A+ 'positive' credit rating for another year is an absolutely excellent result, and something for PCH to be very proud of."



## I'd like to not get into debt if I can help it. Is there anything I can do?

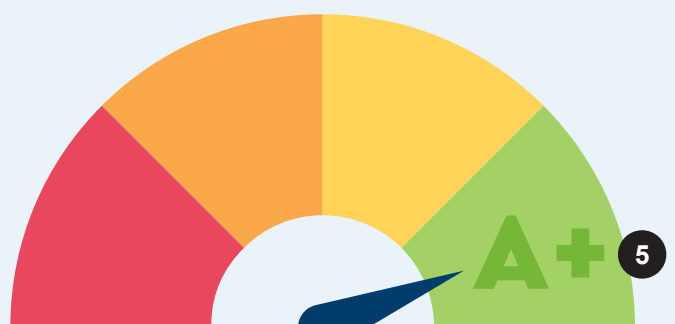
One thing that could help is trying to put a little bit of money back each month in a savings account for those unexpected emergencies. For example, this might help to prevent the need for debt if you require to replace any essential appliances like your cooker or furniture items such as beds.

You might qualify for a Help to Save account from the Government if you are in receipt of Universal Credit and are working. The Help to Save account provides a bonus for those who regularly save over a 2 - 4 year period. More details about how the account works and eligibility requirements can be found here: [www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income](http://www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income)

## Any further advice?

The most important thing that you can do is to reach out to someone and ask for help. All free, independent debt advice services will do their best to find a solution working alongside you.

No matter how bad things may seem there is always something that can be done to help.



# Residents help design new technologies to support them

Plymouth Living Lab is an initiative led by the Centre for Health Technology (University of Plymouth) in partnership with Plymouth Community Homes, Livewell Southwest, University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust and The Lister Alliance.

The project aims to explore the role of assistive health technologies placed in the homes of PCH residents.

The Living Lab initiative, funded by Cisco's Country Digital Acceleration Programme and developed in collaboration with key local partners, initially focuses on using technology to support frailty management and reduce social isolation amongst older adults. The project aims to explore different assistive health technologies and how they can support people to live safely and independently in their homes.



Dr Kieran Green has joined PCH as a Community Engagement Researcher and is working alongside residents to explore different technologies. He completed his doctorate in 2024 on youth homelessness and 'sofa-surfing' in Plymouth and other UK cities. During his PhD he also worked with Torbay Hospital to explore methods of improving frailty care. This work sparked his passion for applying his research skills to engage with local groups and co-creating solutions to difficult problems.

We recently held a series of workshops within our Sheltered Schemes, inviting residents to hear more about the two technology offers we are initially exploring.



Our first technology is a Cisco Solution called 'Deleting Loneliness' that aims to reduce social isolation amongst older people.

In January, residents took part in a co-design workshop at The Beacon Community Hub in North Prospect to help develop this digital offer for socially isolated people in Plymouth. The workshops were attended by Cisco and Cinos, and we are really pleased they were able to join the sessions to ensure that the technology solutions are going to meet the needs of our residents.

Our ambition is to develop an offer that allows older people to attend activities online (horticulture, snack and chat, arts, walks etc) and connect with other people across the city. This technology was piloted in Barcelona during the Covid pandemic and had real impact for the community which we hope to build on here in Plymouth.

**Dr Kieran Green, PCH Community Engagement Researcher, said:** "Our codesign session aimed to bring residents and organisations together to create an accessible online digital platform that allows residents to connect to different organisations.

"It has been a true joy to bring many people together and provide them with a space to generate ideas. The two sessions exceeded my expectations, and I am excited to see how the project develops throughout the year."

**PCH resident Ginny Lee who attended the workshop, said:** “I currently use Zoom and WhatsApp to call my friends across Europe, so I am quite familiar with the technology. I can see it working well for others, and it seemed great.”

**PCH resident Lorraine Crocker, added:** “This technology will definitely enhance people’s lives, benefiting the right people. It’s also been really interesting learning about the project and new ideas.”

**Rachael Fox, Partnership Project Manager at PCH, said:** “It is really exciting to be on this journey with our residents. The Plymouth Living Lab provides a real opportunity for PCH residents to support research that will help other residents and our local health system. By running these co design sessions, we can enable developers to hear directly from the end users, our residents who will benefit most from their technology.”

**Chris Gooding, Chief Technology Officer at Cinos, praised the project, saying:** “It was exciting to show the group the technological advances that have been made, which will start to benefit the community, getting them excited and involved with the future of technology and how they can shape the way it’s used to make their lives and community better overall.”



# Leaseholders drop in March 2025

We value the views and experiences of our leaseholders, and we want to make sure they have the chance to be involved in shaping the services we deliver.

We believe it is important for leaseholders to have the chance to meet key members of our business, understand the work PCH is planning to carry out and have a say in how our services are delivered.

Our leaseholders drop ins are held twice a year and we’ll send all our leaseholders an invitation to join closer to the date.

The next leaseholder drop in will be taking place on Wednesday 26 March 2025 between 1pm to 6pm. It will be located at The Beacon, 163 North Prospect Road, Plymouth PL2 2ND.

There’s no need to book and you can drop in at any time. We’ll also be joined by other teams from across Plymouth Community Homes to discuss any issues you may have relating to your property.



# Rent and service charges from April 2025

Plymouth Community Homes has written to all our tenants to let you know what the new rents and service charges will be for the year ahead.

PCH is proud to offer tenants excellent value for money, and our rents remain significantly lower than other local social housing associations, as well as all private rents.

In fact, our social rents are on average the fourth lowest in England – and are at least 50% lower than the cost of renting the same property from a private landlord, while our affordable rents on newer homes are between 20 and 30% lower than if rented privately.

## Not for profit

As a social landlord and a not for profit community benefit organisation with no shareholders, PCH invests all money from rents back into looking after our homes and communities, and building more homes for future residents.

Some residents also pay us a service charge in addition to their social rent, which includes the cost of providing communal services like caretaking, cleaning, grounds maintenance and, in some blocks, services like communal lighting, individual heating and TV services.

Residents living in sheltered accommodation pay a service charge which includes the cost of providing support services.

PCH does not make any profit on service charges, and only charges what it actually costs to provide those services.

## Rents this year

Our rents are our main source of income to help us pay for repairs and improvements.

We set our rents using Government guidance and the inflation rate, and this year from April 2025, rent increases will be 2.7%.

This is based on the September 2024 Consumer Prices inflation rate of 1.7% plus 1%.

The rent increases of 2.7% also apply to shared owners and those renting garages or parking spaces.

Every tenant will have received an individual letter in February explaining their own rent and service charges, and what the changes mean for them.

## Service charges this year

Tenants who pay a service charge will have also received a statement to explain what their new service charges will be for the coming year.

This year, the majority of our service charges will be decreasing.

The average weekly service charge across all our homes will be decreasing by 12%, and in sheltered housing schemes, the weekly charge will decrease on average by 18%.

This is largely because electricity and gas prices have reduced.



Rents

Service charges

▲ 2.7%

▼ 12%





## Here to help

We know that any change in household finances can be difficult, and we understand the cost-of-living pressures facing our tenants. We are trying to help our tenants with these challenges as much as we can.

PCH staff are here to support you if you are struggling to pay your bills, and can offer help with applying for benefits, reducing your bills or accessing Government financial support.

More information about how we set our rents and service charges, and the help available for tenants who

may be struggling, can be found on our website at [www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/rent-or-buy/rents-and-service-charges](http://www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/rent-or-buy/rents-and-service-charges)

Here you'll find videos explaining processes, as well as answers to common questions.

You can also call our team on **0800 (01752) 388121**.



# We've launched our new Service Standards

At Plymouth Community Homes we're committed to delivering outstanding services for our residents, and to make sure our residents know exactly what they can expect from us, we've developed a new set of Service Standards.

Service Standards apply to our social rent tenants, leaseholders and shared owners, with standards covering areas from repairs and maintenance to housing management and complaints.

They have been put together to ensure our services are fair, equitable and consistent, and recognise the needs of all our residents. They will be monitored and reported on to our Executive Management Team and our Board, with specific measures to assess how well we are performing. Our residents can use these standards to make sure we are providing excellent services which meet their needs, and to hold us to account if we fall short so we can make improvements where we need to.

Our Service Standards have been developed in consultation with our residents and our Customer Focus Committee and built around the Plymouth Community Homes core values to make sure they are focused on residents' needs. These are to

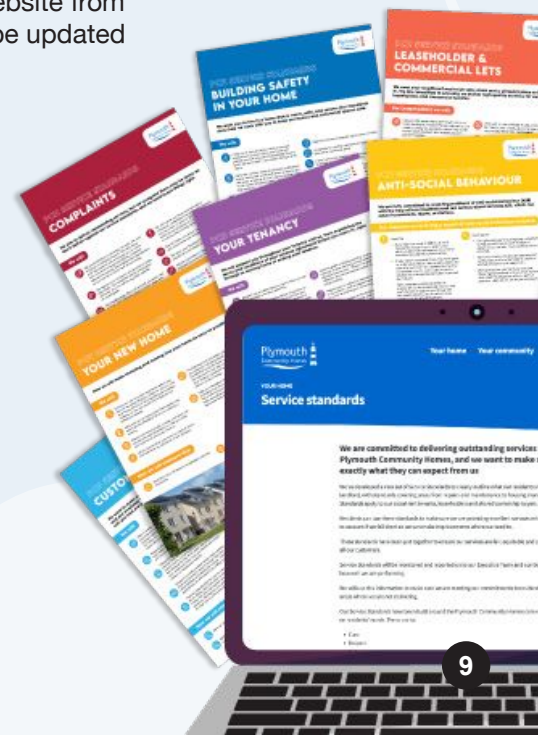
- Care
- Respect
- Listen
- Do the Right Thing

### Michelle Dawson, Executive Director of Homes & Communities at Plymouth Community Homes, said:

“Our residents have helped to shape the standards to ensure they are reflective of what matters most to them. Our Customer Focus Committee, which features a number of resident co optees, has also been heavily involved in developing the standards.

“This information will be used to ensure we are meeting our commitments to our residents, and to help us to make improvements where we need to. Our performance information will be published on our website from April 2025 and will be updated every quarter”

More information about each standard is now available on our website, and they can be downloaded and printed at your convenience.





## Collaboration is key – residents benefit from new patio and bench

The outside communal space at our Housing with Support scheme in Camels Head in Plymouth has been transformed thanks to the support of local contractors.

Following the generous donation of a heavy duty picnic table from Bradfords Building Supplies, Allyson Hood, Housing with Support Officer for the scheme put forward a request for the creation of a new patio to house the bench, and extend the social opportunities for the residents outside of the main communal lounge.

At the rear of the communal lounge was an ample grass area which was not used by residents, and was unsuitable for those with mobility issues or wheelchairs.

Following the support and approval of the request by the tenancy management team at Plymouth Community Homes (PCH), the minor works team at PCH then progressed the project, instructing Hallwell Projects, local building contractors who work closely with PCH to complete the installation of the patio, much to the delight of the residents.

Following the completion of the patio, Hallwell Projects kindly offered to construct the bench that came flat packed, completing the patio area for residents to enjoy when the weather improves.

The collaboration followed a planting day on a sunny Friday afternoon in July 2024, when a group of staff, local residents and PCH contractors joined forces to plant a range of flowers and shrubs to improve a raised area within the scheme (Carlton Terrace) which had previously suffered from anti-social behaviour.

Bradfords and Travis Perkins, building supplies merchants who work closely with PCH on lots of our projects, supported the planting day in July, donating £250 and two staff volunteers and Travis Perkins £50. Residents also submitted a request to PCH for a community grant to top the funding up to be able to complete the planting and PCH donated £300 as well as



10 staff volunteers to help on the day.

The Housing with Support Officer for the scheme, the local Assistant Housing Officer and Minor Works Supervisor at Plymouth Community Homes and a Contract Surveyor at Hallwell Projects met with residents at the scheme to unveil the new patio and bench in January.

The residents were delighted to see the new patio and constructed bench and are excited to start using this in the summer months.

**The residents said:** “The new patio area looks absolutely amazing. We would like to say a huge thank you to the contractors who did an brilliant job in all weathers transforming our outside space. Thank you also to Bradfords for the donation of the bench, which is accessible for us all to use. We’d also like to extend our thanks to Ally, Ryan in the Communities team and the Minor Works team at Plymouth Community Homes for their support.

“We can’t wait to enjoy our new outside space and bench in the sunny weather and to have some fun.”

**Allyson Hood, Housing with Support Officer at Plymouth Community Homes, said:** “We are extremely grateful to Bradfords, Hallwell Projects and the Minor Works Team at Plymouth Community Homes for supporting the Camels Head Sheltered Scheme with this project, and bringing their outside communal area to life.

“This highlights the true collaboration between teams and different organisations, which is always key, and I know that this will be a space that our residents will be able to use and enjoy when the weather gets a bit warmer.”

**Andy Priddle, Contract Surveyor at Hallwell Construction, said:** “We are always delighted to support the residents of Plymouth Community Homes, which always gives us a warm feeling in our heart. We hope they can enjoy their new patio and bench in the sunnier weather.”

**Jo Love, Partnerships Bid Manager at Bradfords, said:** “We fell in love with the residents who are an incredibly fun and vibrant group, and it was a pleasure to provide the bench which I am sure they will put to good use!

“The project has developed into the Friends of Camels Head Gardening Group, to help maintain and improve the outside areas, and as a hands-on volunteer, my colleague and I can’t recommend it enough! It been a pleasure.”



## Unlock Your Potential with our Free Training Programme!

Are you looking to enhance your skills and boost your confidence? Our free training programme is here to help you achieve your goals! Learn for Free is designed specifically for you; courses cover a range of topics to support your personal and professional development.

### Why take part in a Learn for Free course?

Learn for Free offers a variety of courses tailored to meet your needs whether you’re looking to improve your employment skills, gain essential life skills, or get involved in your community.

Here are some of the courses we offer:

- **Employment Skills:** Take part in courses such as first aid and health and safety to build your CV and develop workplace skills that employers value.
- **Life Skills:** Build your confidence and motivation, manage your finances, and discover the joys of cooking healthy and tasty meals.

- **Involvement Skills:** Get certified in committee skills, learn food safety practices to support group activities, and improve your communication skills.

Don’t miss out on these fantastic opportunities. Sign up to receive updates and be the first to know about new courses. Simply visit our website or contact Ashleigh Knowles, our Resident Learning Co-Ordinator to register your interest on [learnforfree@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](mailto:learnforfree@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk) or by calling 0808 230 6500.



Read more on InTouch online



# Asset Management Update 2025

To ensure everyone has a high-quality affordable home, it's vital we look after the places we already own and invest in our communities to keep our homes safe, comfortable, warm and dry.

There are a number of ways we are looking after our homes and maintaining them to the Decent Homes Standard (a technical standard established by the Government for social housing), which include carrying out a range of works including mechanical and engineering, planned maintenance, refurbishment works and completing Energy Performance Certificate Assessments across all homes.

As part of our major works investment programme, we wanted to share more information about stock condition surveys, and our new kitchen, bathroom, window and loft insulation contracts.

## Stock Condition Surveys

A stock condition survey is where a surveyor looks at our homes to check what condition they are in.

During the survey visit, which takes less than an hour, our surveyor will take photos and view all rooms, both inside and outside of your home. You don't need to do anything; you will just need to be home and there to open the door to our surveyor.

We understand the surveys may feel intrusive but rest assured, we're not checking how tidy your home is - we're just making sure it meets health and safety standards and is in a good state of repair. It's also part of your tenancy agreement to allow access for these surveys to be undertaken. The data gathered from the surveys will be used to plan for repairs and future investment programmes.

For more information about our survey programme, please take a look at the FAQs on our website.





## New kitchen, bathroom, window and loft insulation

We will be starting a project to replace kitchen, bathroom, window and loft insulation within some of our homes where these works are needed.

Residents who are due to receive any of these replacement works before the end of March 2025 will start to receive letters shortly.

## 2025/26 Major Improvements Programme

Every year, we have a major works investment programme to refurbish and upgrade our homes and blocks, decarbonising more properties to help reduce energy bills for our residents. The 2025/26 programme will result in the following works commencing:

- Kitchen replacement
- Bathroom replacement
- Heating replacement
- Windows and door replacement
- EPC D to C upgrade works
- Electrical rewire works
- Pembroke Street refurbishment works
- How/Looe and Vauxhall Street flats – commence external redecoration and repair works
- Cecil/High/King Street – commence phased external redecoration and repair works
- Roof repair/replacement – High Street flats
- Completion of Elspeth Sitters roof
- Completion of Hoegate Street works

Works to homes are prioritised by the highest need. We'll write to you before work is due to be carried out to your home or communal areas in your building.

Further details will be provided on a quarterly basis on our website.





## Jordan Lauder aka SpraySaint

In recent years, street art has become more mainstream, breaking free from its underground reputation and being celebrated as a popular form of artistic expression that can be found on walls, alleyways and underpasses across Britain.

We met Jordan Lauder, better known by his street art name of SpraySaint, who has created a number of impressive murals and commissions in the city in recent years – many created in collaboration with Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) and other local partners to brighten up otherwise dull grey concrete spaces for the community.

Bude-based Jordan was introduced to graffiti when he was 11 years old. He explained: “It was my dad who first got me interested, as I loved drawing and spent hours of my time trying to perfect my art. He gave me some old books about the origins of graffiti on the subway trains in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, and I was hooked immediately.

“Most of the time I am commissioned to paint murals, so the client will contact me with a space in mind that I can create my artwork on.

“They will show me the space and I’ll ask them if they have any rough ideas on what they would like to see.

Sometimes they provide me with a brief and sometimes they are flexible and leave it to my imagination. Either way I try to take their ideas and incorporate it into my art – after all, it’s their space and I just try to create something in my own style that fits the space.”

Having completed dozens of pieces of art across the country, is there one that stands out as Jordan’s favourite?

“I’ve worked with lots of different clients over the years, and one that stands out was the commission I painted with a friend for Sky TV. It was a mural for the premiere event of their hit TV series *The Last of Us*, and we painted some portraits of the main characters of the series including Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey, which was pretty cool.

“But I have to say it’s hard to pick a favourite. In Plymouth, it has to be the work I created for PCH at their tall building at Morley Court in the city centre, which is on a main road. I painted various British wildlife and the main piece as a huge stag and fawn facing Western Approach where people get off the bus. I loved every minute of that project, and enjoy seeing it every time I drive past.”

Creating masterpieces has been Jordan’s full-time job for the past seven years and it is a testament to his skills and abilities that he has been able to completely focus on his passion for that amount of time.

“I’m really thankful to have been kept busy the past few years and I have some amazing clients I work with who have supported me because they appreciate what I can create,” Jordan said.

“The feedback I get from the public is great. When I’m working, people are fascinated when they see me using spray cans and they can’t get their head around how I create the work I

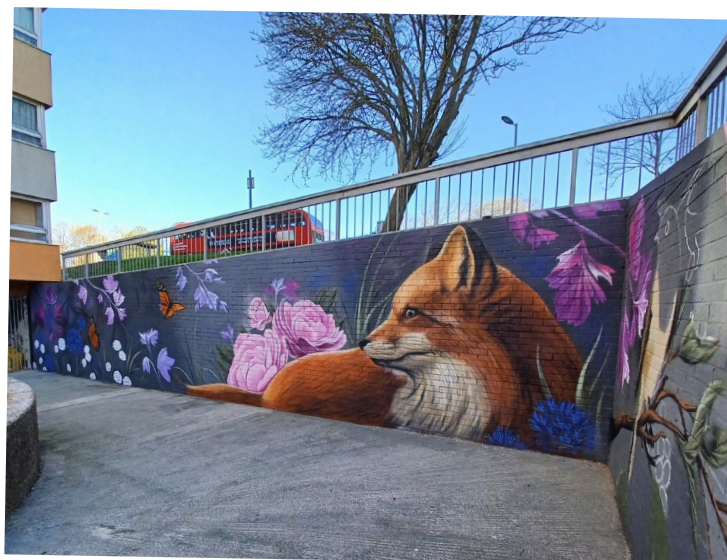


do using spray paint as my tools. I have had the police called on me lots of times when I'm starting out a new mural in a public place as passers by sometimes think I'm there to vandalise the wall!"

Finally, we asked Jordan what he likes to do in his spare time – and the answer, unsurprisingly, is paint.

He said: "I work with Plymouth Artists Together who are a great little organisation run by my friend Mike Vosper, and give out opportunities to artists of all abilities. Whether you are just starting out, or have been doing it all your life, they'll help you to find permission for a spot to paint somewhere."

Mike Vosper added: "Our aim at Plymouth Artists Together is to regenerate those unloved areas one wall at a time and bring a smile to someone's face when they



stumble across a piece of art in an unexpected place." Jordan continued: "Because of this, beautiful pieces of artwork are popping up everywhere around Plymouth and beyond – it doesn't just brighten up the city, it brightens people's lives as they go about their day-to-day business.

"It's like an open-air art gallery where everyone is invited."



## Residents take the lead to manage PCH focus groups

This spring, some of our engaged residents got involved in helping to lead focus groups to gather feedback on the work we do and help shape the development of a new Communications Strategy.

We carry out consultations regularly to review new PCH strategies, policies and processes and residents are often asked to take part in surveys or focus groups but it was a new approach for these focus groups to be led and managed by a group of involved residents – and it was a huge success.

Volunteers from our Virtual Resident Advisors (VRA) panel were drafted in to help make this happen. The VRA is a group of residents meeting monthly to review our communications, tell us what sort of content they want to see in our regular newsletters, and let us know their thoughts on the language we use in key letters, suggesting ways to improve it.

VRA members Melony Gallagher, Tracy Lowings, Suzanne Hyde and Stacey Winn offered to help with the consultation for a new Communications Strategy so we asked them to work with our resident engagement team. The four were empowered to take the lead in the focus group process – and did an incredible job, leading a

2-hour, in-person focus group session. They presented, led discussions, steered debate and managed workshops so we could gather helpful constructive suggestions.

**One of the volunteers, Tracy Lowings, said:** "It was great to see that we have a such a diverse group of tenants. I hope they will want to get more involved as they will realise that it's all about them and how they can have a voice in shaping resident services. It's also a good opportunity to feedback some of the work PCH is doing to their communities, as word of mouth is the most powerful form of communication."

We have lots of different ways residents can be involved, so whether you've got 5 minutes or a couple of hours a week free, check out our Resident Involvement page to see what suits you.



# DAZZLE

## Devonport's Festival of Light, Creativity and Heritage

Between 27th February – 2nd March 2025, Real Ideas Organisation hosted Dazzle! Devonport's Festival of Light, Creativity and Heritage, a unique free-to-access festival marking 200 years of Devonport.

Building on experience delivering 'Illuminate' and a significant £246,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Dazzle was the culmination of a series of projects to honour Devonport's incredible transformation over the centuries.

From stunning light installations to immersive experiences, Dazzle invited people to experience the area in a way they've never seen before. The Devonport Column, Market Hall and our very own Devonport Towers were transformed into canvases for storytelling using projection mapping, inviting audiences to see the buildings in new ways and deepen their understanding of the history attached to them.



## PCH secures 15 affordable homes at Palmerston Heights in Plymouth

Plymouth Community Homes will be delivering more affordable homes in Plymouth after securing 15 energy-efficient homes at Palmerston Heights in Derriford.

The 15 new homes, consisting of one-, two-, three- and four- bedrooms are being purchased within the fourth phase of the Palmerston Heights development in Derriford, a well-established residential area in the north of the city.

Of the 15 homes, 10 will be offered for affordable rent and five homes will be made available for shared ownership purchase through our sales brand SO Living.

The homes will be prioritised to those with a local connection to the area to meet the specific needs of the

community, which has been made possible thanks to the support from key partner, Plymouth City Council.

**Nick Jackson, Executive Director of Business Services and Development at Plymouth Community Homes, said:** "We are committed to working with our partners at Plymouth City Council to deliver more, much-needed affordable housing for local people, and these 15 homes will be an excellent addition to the city's available affordable housing stock. We're especially pleased to be acquiring some larger three and four-bed family homes to meet local need."

The homes will be available from Spring 2025.





The Dazzle festival featured contributions from local community groups, schools, artists, and volunteers including many of our PCH residents who are enrolled on the Devonport Futures programme, ensuring that it was a celebration made by and for the people of Devonport.

The name “Dazzle” pays homage to Devonport and Plymouth’s rich maritime heritage and the groundbreaking use of dazzle camouflage by the Royal Navy. Developed during World War I by marine artist Norman Wilkinson, “dazzle” was designed to confuse enemy submarines by distorting a ship’s size, shape, and direction. It broke from traditional camouflage by embracing bold geometric patterns and contrasting colours. The “Dazzle” festival celebrated this legacy of innovation, creativity, and Plymouth’s enduring connection to the sea.

Devonport residents were invited to a ‘first look’ at Dazzle on the launch night to experience the festival

before it opened to the wider public as a small way of thanking them for their invaluable contribution to the event. This was followed by a VIP celebration which was joined by the local community and staff from PCH, Plymouth City Council and other organisations contributing to Devonport’s history.

Residents were delighted to be involved in the festival, and local PCH resident Leroy certainly got stuck in with all things Dazzle. **He said:** “The Dazzle festival was brilliant, and it was great to be able to be involved. My neighbours and their families also enjoyed the celebrations. Thank you to Real Ideas Organisation for all they have done for our community, and we can’t wait to find out what else they plan in the future.”

Find out more about Devonport 200 on their website - [www.devonport200.uk/dazzle](http://www.devonport200.uk/dazzle)

All available homes to rent in Devon are advertised on Devon Home Choice. To bid for a property or to be considered for a tenancy, registration will need to be completed using their online application form.

For more information or to register an interest in one of the shared ownership homes, visit the SO Living website.





# Fly-tipping in your neighbourhood

Fly-tipping is rubbish or items illegally left on land without the owner's permission. It can include large items like white goods, furniture, garden waste, commercial builder waste, litter and any refuse that householders can't fit in the household waste bins.

Fly-tipping is a criminal offence. Those caught fly-tipping can be prosecuted and could face a fixed penalty notice of £150 to £400 for small-scale offences or up to £500 for larger incidents.

In a year\*, we spent £56,866 on clearing fly-tipped items from PCH neighbourhoods, blocks and bin stores. On average, that's almost 70 hours a month spent clearing 15.5 tonnes of rubbish. This money could have been spent on:

- Providing 32,681 hours of training for residents through our Learn for Free programme
- Installing 268 metres of fencing in our neighbourhoods
- Supporting 339 community initiatives through our community grant scheme
- Providing 54 extra hours of tenancy sustainment support to residents per week.

It's also time that our neighbourhood Rangers could have spent maintaining our estates and blocks.

Help us keep your neighbourhoods clean and tidy and dispose of your unwanted items properly.

\*Based on figures from January to September 2024

For more information about what items you can put in your household waste bin, how you can dispose of larger items and fly-tipping in blocks, visit our website: [www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/your-community/neighbourhood-services/report-fly-tipping](http://www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/your-community/neighbourhood-services/report-fly-tipping)

## Reporting fly-tipping

If you see fly-tipping in your neighbourhood on PCH land, you can report it to us using our dedicated fly-tipping form on our website.

If the fly-tipping isn't on PCH property or you don't know who owns the land, please report it to your local council: Plymouth City Council, Cornwall Council or South Hams District Council.

Please also report anyone you see fly-tipping to the local council enforcement team in your local authority.

## Tackling fly-tipping

If you live in the Stonehouse area, and would like to be involved in any upcoming projects to tackle fly-tipping in this area and improve the environment, please contact Leigh Ferguson, Senior Communities Worker on [leigh.ferguson@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](mailto:leigh.ferguson@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk) or call 0808 230 6500 and ask for Leigh.

You can also contact your local housing team if you would like to discuss fly-tipping in your area.

You can find their details on our website [www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/contact/find-my-housing-team](http://www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/contact/find-my-housing-team) or by calling us on 0808 230 6500.



# Community Wellbeing Champion Programme



**Community Wellbeing Champion**  
Part of the Health & Housing Project

During January and February, we hosted Community Wellbeing Champion Training for our residents in partnership with Livewell Southwest.

We recognise the importance of involved residents in their community, and the positive impact that neighbour relationships can have on the wellbeing of residents and the wider community.

The Wellbeing programme helps our residents to develop the knowledge and skills needed to be a Wellbeing Champion within their community.

The free two-day course gives individuals access to information and connects them to a supportive network of members to help them to remain up to date with what support is available for people.

Residents embraced the training opportunity, and thoroughly enjoyed the free course, where they received a certificate upon completion.

**Tracy Lowings, PCH resident, said:** “The course was enlightening, and it was great to be amongst a group of such diverse individuals who all had a lot of different views. I now have more knowledge about wellbeing, where to find help and how to help my community. I would recommend it. Just two days, but a lifetime of information.”

**Charley Roberts, Health Improvement Practitioner at Livewell Southwest, said:** “It’s great to be working in partnership with PCH on the Community Wellbeing Champion Project. Each time we deliver these sessions, we notice how valuable talking about our health and wellbeing is for everyone.

“Being able to create a space where everyone can share what activities are happening in their community to bring people together, watching relationships build and hearing the ideas that are discussed to create a more supportive environment for health and wellbeing has been the highlight of facilitating the sessions.”

We will be continuing to develop this programme under our Health and Housing Partnership. To register your interest in future Community Wellbeing Champion training, email: [healthandhousing@pch.co.uk](mailto:healthandhousing@pch.co.uk).



## Read more in our digital InTouch

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# Sign up to MyPCH




Visit [mypch.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](https://mypch.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk)  
or download the new MyPCH app.

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 one of our publications, we'd love to hear it.

Email [news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](mailto:news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk)

## Plymouth Community Homes

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 [www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](https://www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk)

 0808 230 6500

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