

# InTouch

Issue 59 Autumn 2024



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# Welcome to the Autumn edition of InTouch.

As we head into autumn and reluctantly wave goodbye to summer, in this edition we look back at the last few months, and what our residents and staff have been up to in the community.

We share stories about your achievements, including our resident Leland who won the Young Employee of the Year award at the Plymouth Youth Awards (page 16), and speak to dedicated residents John and Leanne about their unwavering commitment to their neighbours (page 4).

Over the last few months our staff have attended several events including Pride in the Park (page 12), and the opening of the Southway Community Hub. We also organised a variety of events for our residents and their families including Barne Barton Community Fun Day (page 3) where really enjoyed meeting so many of you, and we look forward to seeing you at future events.

In our Plymspirational feature, we share the work of Crossroads Fun and Friendship Centre, which is now in its 30th year of providing support to adults with mental health support needs. They provide a pivotal support network to individuals and our residents living across our city, with the aim of fun and friendship at their core (page 14&15).

We hear from Ian Howse, Head of Repairs who reiterates our commitment to tackling damp and mould in our

homes, following the creation of our Damp and Disrepair team, and share simple steps to avoid condensation, which is often the main cause of mould (page 6).

In our 'You Said, We Did' feature we share with you what changes we've made to help improve your communities, as we work on Neighbourhood Plans for different parts of Plymouth and within this edition, we also share the upcoming dates of our Community Walkabouts which is the perfect opportunity for you to get involved, and to meet your local housing team (page 8 & 9).

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

## PCH donates fleet vehicle to support local community partner

Last year we loaned one of our fleet vans to Plymouth Scrapstore for a trial for 12 months to help them with their community work after their van had broken down. Now, 15 months later, we're pleased to say we've donated the van to the community project.

Plymouth Scrapstore is a local community project which plays a role in delivering playful creativity and promoting play through craft and sustainability throughout Plymouth.

Nick Jackson, Executive Director of Business Services & Development, Peter Jackson, Fleet Manager, and Graham Rothwell, Head of Strategic Procurement, decided to donate the vehicle to the Scrapstore free of charge permanently, as it had served its purpose at PCH and could be given a second life within the community.



**Nick Jackson,**  
said: "The Scrapstore

is a real gem for the local communities on Union Street and the wider Stonehouse and Devonport areas, and also attracts people from across the city. The van allows a treasure trove of goodies to be taken to further out communities and to organised events.

"It is one of our older vans that we are replacing, but it holds a much higher value for the Scrapstore. Having loaned it to them for over a year, it felt like an easy step to gift it to them and fits in with our support for an area where many of our residents live. By donating one of our vans, we aim to support their endeavours and help further their mission of building a stronger, more sustainable community."

This partnership ensures that positive services continue to be delivered by this invaluable local community project.





# Barne Barton Community Fun Day 2024

Over 700 residents from the Barne Barton community gathered at Barney Park to enjoy a day of fun and activities at the start of the summer holidays.

The event was a collaborative effort by The Pioneers Project, Community Builders, and Barnardos, aiming to bring the community together with funding from the North Yard Community Trust, local councillors, Plymouth City Council and LiveWest. It featured a variety of activities including face painting, football, pizza making, a bouncy castle, a slip and slide, arts and crafts, and even an interactive pop-up escape room. It was an exciting opportunity for local businesses and community projects to showcase their services and for residents to enjoy a day of entertainment.

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) attended the event, where staff from Tenancy Management in collaboration with the Health & Housing Project manned the stand.

It was a great opportunity for PCH to be in the community socialising with residents from Barne Barton and the surrounding areas. The PCH stand offered pebble painting, colouring and supported by Food is Fun to provide some healthy food recipes and talk about making healthy food swaps.

**Nicola Street, Housing Officer at Plymouth Community Homes, said:** “It was a great chance for us to talk to residents, finding out what they like about their estates and what they would like to see improved, as well as any problems accessing services, reporting antisocial behaviour and encouraging community cohesion.”

**Susan, a resident from Crownhill who attended with her granddaughter, said:** “They have done an amazing job, free food for children is amazing and my granddaughter hasn’t stopped all day, she has absolutely loved it. They have made everyone proud.”





# Community Spotlight: John and Leanne at Tavy House



During a recent visit to Tavy House, we had the opportunity to speak with John and Leanne, two dedicated residents who have had a significant impact on their community.

John and Leanne's commitment to their neighbours is unwavering. In December, they received a late-night call when Angela, a fellow resident, fell ill with food poisoning. From 11pm until 2am, the pair stayed by Angela's side, called the paramedics, and made sure she received proper care.

A couple months afterwards, Angela experienced another misfortune, falling in both the front room and the bathroom. Another resident reached out to John and Leanne in the middle of the night. They called an ambulance, informed Angela's family, and stayed with her until help arrived. Recognising her needs, they even managed to get a walker for her after she injured her hip.

Angela also fell again more recently. Fellow neighbours heard her cries, when another resident, Martin, contacted John and Leanne for a spare key, and they stayed with Angela until 1am, ensuring her safety and comfort.

In the lobby of Tavy House, we met Allison, one of Angela's daughters, who shared her heartfelt appreciation: "They are always available 24/7, which is a huge relief since I live 30 minutes away. I wish my neighbours were as reliable. They have consistently exceeded expectations and are always on standby."

**"We love helping people. We'd bend over backwards for our community. We've made many great friends here, and we're always happy to help and look out for them."**

Grateful for their support, Angela's other daughter sent John and Leanne a thank-you card and an email expressing her deep appreciation.

John and Leanne run the Tavy House Breakfast Club, which has grown to 30 members. This hub has allowed them to forge strong connections and create a reliable support network. **John**

**said:** "We love helping people. We'd bend over backwards for our community. We've made many great friends here, and we're always happy to help and look out for them."

**Leanne added:** "Helping the community keeps us busy and positive despite our own challenges. It's incredibly rewarding to receive letters of thanks and realise the positive impact we have on people's lives."

Meeting John and Leanne, it is evident that they are key members of Tavy House, always willing to offer a helping hand. Their commitment promotes family and support within the community.





# Residents, staff and contractors working together to improve lives

A group of staff, local residents and PCH contractors joined forces to improve an area at our Camel's Head sheltered bungalow scheme which had been suffering from anti-social behaviour in recent years.



On a sunny Friday, a group of volunteers descended on the scheme to plant a range of flowers and shrubs that were a mixture of donations from several of our contractors.

The scheme at Camel's Head had large bushes growing alongside a wall, and several times in recent years people had hidden in the bushes to avoid the police which caused residents to become concerned, and we acted to remove the bushes completely.

Communities Worker Ryan Huws from PCH spoke to residents at the scheme and they agreed that they wanted to plant some flowers and small shrubs to give the area a colourful boost.

Enthusied by the conversations, Ryan contacted companies Bradfords and Travis Perkins, building supplies merchants, who work closely with PCH on lots of our projects and they were more than happy to help, with Bradfords donating £250 and two staff volunteers and Travis Perkins £50.

Residents 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 residents held four planning meetings to ensure the day ran smoothly.

And so, we found ourselves – in wellies, and trowels in hand, ready to get started.

The sun continued to shine throughout, as those PCH staff who had made use of their Make a Difference days – one of three volunteer days that employees can take throughout the year.

Ryan Huws, Danni Revell, Leigh Ferguson, Sam Paskins, Jessi Martin, Allyson Hood, Aisha Zahid, Leah Winters, Jay Vickers and Emma Giles were all on hand to carry out the work on behalf of the residents, joined by Jo Love and Phyllida Daffen from Bradfords.

Within a few hours, the flowers were planted and everyone crammed into the scheme's community room to share a lovely lunch, with the additions of some delicious homemade quiche and cakes that the residents had whipped up in the kitchen.

The afternoon proved to be much more strenuous with wheelbarrows of mulch being delivered up the planting area to bed in the new arrivals before an Environmental Services team from PCH came along to give the new flowerbeds a good watering.

Camel's Head Social Group chair Gaynor Southerton thanked each of the volunteers

in a heartwarming speech and each of the volunteers was given a special thank you gift on behalf of the members of the group.

**Ryan Huws who was instrumental in getting the project off the ground, said:** "It was a fabulous experience, and this is what it's all about, working together to benefit and improve the community. Camel's Head is a fantastic scheme, and they have a great sense of community with lots of social activities and they always look out for each other. So, it was lovely to be able to make a difference to our residents who live there.

"We're looking forward to going back next year and getting some pictures when the flowers are in bloom!"





# Damp, Mould & Condensation reminder

Damp, mould and condensation can make your home less pleasant and unsightly to live in, as well as posing serious health risks, so PCH is committed to tackling the issue.

Plymouth Community Homes has a triage reporting system to help prioritise its response to any reports of damp and mould in residents' homes.

Last year, three new roles were created with a Damp and Disrepair Manager and two Damp and Disrepair Supervisors appointed to carry out damp and mould inspections, and ensure PCH provided the right response in a timely manner. This year, a Damp and Disrepair Coordinator has also been appointed.

PCH is working to a 14-day response time for any report of damp and mould, and 7-day response time for residents with known vulnerabilities.

**Ian Howse, Head of Repairs at PCH, said:** "We take damp and mould very seriously as it can have a hugely negative impact on people's health, as well as making it unpleasant and uncomfortable living in your home, and we are doing everything we can to respond promptly and tackle issues when they are reported to us."

In modern, well-insulated homes, condensation can quickly build up which is often the main cause of mould.

Condensation is simply moisture in your home which hasn't been able to escape – the moisture can be created through cooking, drying clothes, showering and even breathing.



## Some simple steps can help avoid this moisture build-up:

- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles
- Cover boiling pans when cooking
- Cover fish tanks to stop water evaporating
- Dry clothes outside when possible, or in a small room with the window open
- Make sure tumble dryers are ventilated to the outside
- Open windows or use extractor fans to let cooking steam escape (and do this for 20 minutes after cooking)
- Open windows for a while each day, or use trickle vents
- Leave a space between furniture and walls so air can circulate
- Don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes, so there's space for air to flow
- Keep air vents free from obstructions
- Maintain a low heat in your home when it's cold or wet
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when you're cooking, bathing or washing



## Book an inspection

If you think you have a damp problem, book an inspection by calling us on **0808 650 2300** or send an enquiry.

You can view our response standards on our website.



Find out more  
on our website



# Major Works Investment Programme

It's vital we invest in our properties to keep our homes safe, comfortable, warm and dry for residents.

Every year, we have a major works investment programme to refurbish and upgrade our homes and blocks, as well as working to decarbonise more properties to help reduce energy bills for residents.

The main focus of the investment programme is making sure all our rented homes are maintained to the Decent Homes Standard, which is a technical standard established by the Government for social housing landlords.

As part of this, we carry out a range of works including mechanical and engineering, planned maintenance, refurbishment works and completing Energy Performance Certificate Assessments. All works are completed, where relevant, in accordance with the Building Safety Act 2022.

We have created a new PCH webpage to help tell residents about the Major Works Investment Programme and so you can find out when any upgrades are due to happen to your block, street or home.

Work to homes will be prioritised by the highest need and will be carried out in phases, and you will be contacted before any work is due to be carried out.

We are committed to sharing news and updates with you on the webpage above and on social media at least every three months, as well as offering the opportunity to join customer engagement opportunities throughout the year.

We'll also write to you before any work is due to be carried out to your home or communal areas in your building.

Working with a group of residents, we have now started the process of finding a new contractor to work on our kitchens, bathroom and windows and doors where they need to be replaced. This work is expected to start this autumn.

# Understanding our Homes

We have recently been carrying out Energy Performance Certificate inspections and stock condition surveys on our homes.

We would like to thank you for your help in allowing us access to complete these inspections. This is set to continue over the next 12-18 months to ensure:

- 100% of our homes have a valid Energy Performance Certificate
- 100% of our homes have a stock condition survey completed within the last 5 years

These are key business priorities to help us understand the standard of our homes, and ensure we can deliver better outcomes for our customers.

There are lots of reasons why these inspections and surveys are important:

- Know our customers: These surveys also help us to better understand what matters to our residents, and what your priorities are for your homes, so we can deliver better services for our customers.
- Energy Efficiency: We are committed to providing homes that are warm and cost effective. Having up to date information and current EPCs, which tell us how energy efficient a home is, will help us to plan and prioritise our investment in our homes so we can deliver the best possible results for our residents.
- Maintaining our homes: Current stock condition survey data helps us to effectively plan our programmes of planned investment to keep your home in a good condition and ensure we carry out upgrades when they are needed. We have now procured contracts to enable us to deliver renewal programmes for kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and roof replacements.
- Business Planning: This information helps us to plan ahead, so we can best understand how much we will need to spend on our homes and when. This in turn gives assurance to our lenders, so we can keep our excellent credit rating, enabling us to deliver on our overall business plan objectives.



Find out more  
on our website







## You Said, We Did – Neighbourhood Plans

Every year, we speak to residents to find out what they would like us to improve about the area they live in so we can help to improve their communities.

Here we share with you what changes we've made over several of the areas we visited as we work on Neighbourhood Plans for different parts of the Plymouth area.

### Devonport

**You said:** Residents in Devonport asked us to look at some of the issues in the area including fly-tipping, parking, outdoor spaces and drug use.

#### **We Did:**

- Anti-social behaviour and drink and drug issues are prevalent in the area – tenancy management attend regular meetings with the local Police to share information.
- The Police are carrying out several patrols in the area each day.
- PCH has applied for further CCTV and magnetic fob entry doors for some of the blocks.
- We are also working with the Safer Communities Team to resolve issues, and our Environmental Team are reporting incidents of fly-tipping, whilst our CCTV is proving useful in managing this issue.
- We are asking cars that shouldn't be in our spaces to move which is proving effective.

### Plympton St

**You said:** Residents in Plympton St Maurice asked us to look at issues in the area including inconsiderate parking during school runs, potholes, overgrown gardens and anti-social behaviour.

#### **We Did:**

- We've been working with our Housing with Support team about addressing parking issues. We found most residents were tolerant of cars being parked during school runs, except when dropped curbs had been blocked. We have asked the local school to send out reminders in their newsletter which has helped.
- Potholes have been reported to Plymouth City Council's highways department.
- Gardens differ in the area, and the grass is not always cut. We are working to help anyone who may need support in the area.
- We're working through some anti-social behaviour cases in the community at the moment, although anti-social behaviour is often lower in this area than most others.

## Liskeard

**You said:** Residents in Liskeard asked us to look at issues including parking, anti-social behaviour and seagulls.

### We Did:

- We have worked with Safer Liskeard to help build relationships in the community and met local councillors to gain their help.
- Our Partnership Manager has linked in with service partners in Cornwall to ensure consistency across Devon and Cornwall.

## West Park

**You said:** Residents in West Park asked us to look at some of the problems they experience including cleaning of communal areas and block, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.

### We Did:

- We have projected costs to cover cleaning for extra areas and it is cost-effective so we are planning to consult with residents to see if they want this introduced. We'll be looking at the resources available and ensure it is consistent across the blocks to improve the environment.
- Most of the surrounding land belongs to Plymouth City Council and can take a long time for some areas to be cleared, although since we have been reporting it, it seems to have improved.
- We have taken action against one of the main perpetrators of anti-social behaviour in this area which has improved the situation.
- We are working with the local police to resolve issues with youths in the area, which is supported by social services, youth workers and schools.

## Southway

**You said:** Residents in Southway asked us to look at problems being reported in their area which included issues with litter, dog mess and fly-tipping.

### We Did:

- Over the past 12 months we've worked closely with our Environmental Services team on addressing issues with fly-tipping. We have tried to identify perpetrators and remove items as quickly as possible.
- We have also added a brand new function to our website so residents can more easily report issues of fly-tipping, complete with a map so residents can report problems to us quickly and accurately.
- Litter picks were arranged by Southway Community Builder in areas identified by residents with specific problems with litter. This has been really positive and residents from the community have been happy to be involved.
- Play parks in the area are owned by Plymouth City Council and we have reported issues to the local councillors and to officers where residents have let us know about litter or mess.
- CCTV has been proven to work as a successful tool for managing fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour, and we are looking into this for the Southway area - but we would need 60% of residents to support this for it to go ahead.
- Southway drop-in sessions were well attended by residents who were able to report these issues to their Housing Officers, as well as talk about any tenancy management problems.






# Celebrating 30 Years of Pembroke Street Estate Management Board

The Pembroke Street Estate Management Board (Pembroke Street EMB) was formed in 1994, and this year they are celebrating its 30th anniversary, a journey that has involved thousands of residents, volunteers, employees, training and visitors over the last 30 years.

The role of the Pembroke Street EMB is to provide a high-quality, resident led, housing management service and a place where residents can call home and feel part of a community. It facilitates connections between people, with projects and services which address common challenges and help them to build resilience and achieve fulfilling lives.

This year, the Pembroke Street EMB was pleased to complete the conversion of two buildings on the Pembroke Street estate, and the modern facilities will provide a space for more community connections to be made into the future for all age groups, continuing the work that began way back in the 1980's.

To celebrate this momentous milestone, the Pembroke Street EMB have created an extended document which captures some of the key moments in the unique story of Pembroke Estate Management Board, highlighting the 'determination, the dedication, the people and the parties!'.  


## The history of Pembroke Street

The estate was built in the post war period and was a popular place to live for many. Pembroke Street rapidly deteriorated in the 1980s to become part of the most deprived council ward in the country, and the decline of the naval dockyard saw unemployment rapidly rise and with it followed poor health, crime and social unrest.

Years later, a small group of Pembroke Street residents who were determined to see their housing and wider living conditions improve teamed up with some key advisors and advocates and targeted Government regeneration funding with a plan to take over the management of their Council housing.

As a result, the residents secured a multi-million-pound Government regeneration grant to enable the estate to be completely transformed. It was a scheme that was entirely resident led and designed, supported by key advisors, which included groundbreaking elements such as 'Secured by Design' where the potential for criminal activity is reduced through the use of open plan visible areas and improved lighting. Other elements included a focus on energy efficiency, and the use of vibrant building colour, and the introduction of resident designed public art, and a diverse planting scheme helped to transform the estate from grey and drab into a warm and welcoming oasis.

As the physical regeneration of the estate took shape, a partnership agreement was signed between Plymouth City Council and the residents who became the founding directors of a new not-for-profit company. Pembroke Street Estate Management Board Ltd was established and began to manage the Pembroke Street flats.

30 years later, the Pembroke Street Estate Management Board is celebrating its latest milestone, and if you'd like to read their anniversary book, please contact the Pembroke Street EMB via email at [office@pembrokestreet.co.uk](mailto:office@pembrokestreet.co.uk) or by calling **01752 607277**.

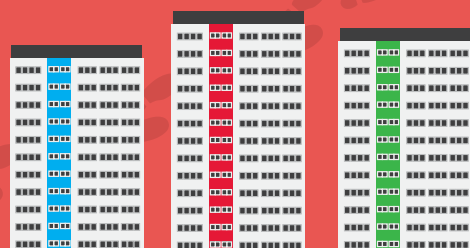
## Community Walkabouts: Tall Buildings

We spoke to Jo Rees, our Tall Buildings Liaison Officer about the community walkabouts in our six tall buildings across the city.

**Jo said:** "I carry out regular walkabouts on the six tall buildings, which consists of checking all floors, stairwells, laundries, communal areas, sheds and outside areas.

"I regularly chat to residents as I am carrying out the walkabouts, where they will raise any concerns that they have which I can action right away.

"We also hold drop-in sessions at Morley Court and Woodland Court every Wednesday."





# Residents set to shape future of health technology in their own homes

**Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) is working on a ‘digital living lab’ project which will explore the impact of digital health technology within the homes of our residents.**



Working with the Centre for Health Technology, University of Plymouth and Livewell Southwest, the project is funded by global IT firm Cisco, bringing PCH and partners into The Lister Alliance, a healthcare innovation programme.

The project aims to establish a ‘Plymouth Living Lab’ to address frailty management in the home environment, supported by our ‘Health and Housing’ partnership with Livewell Southwest.

The ‘Plymouth Living Lab’, set to

be one of the largest in the world, will be developed by a network of local, national and global partners, including; Livewell Southwest, University Hospitals Plymouth, Plymouth City Council, NHS Devon and Health Innovation Southwest.

The project will focus on older individuals with frailty, and our residents will be provided opportunities to help co-design technology, such as sensors in the home and wearable devices. Piloting these various new technologies, that aim to help them remain independent in their own homes, will support the system shift to care delivery away from hospitals to care in peoples homes.

The Living Lab was launched at an event at The Beacon in July, which featured a network of local and national collaborators with interactive stands to showcase their health and technology solutions, allowing residents to get hands-on experience with the devices and services on offer. Find out more about the official launch here.

**Rachael Fox, Partnership Project Manager, said:** “The Health and Housing Partnership is all about how we can work together with other organisations to deliver services that support the health and wellbeing of

our residents. Enabling them access to test new technology that supports their independence at home is an exciting step forward”.

“I am proud that PCH is leading the way in bringing housing and health services together.”

**Jonathan Cowie, Chief Executive at Plymouth Community Homes, said:** “We are very proud to be pioneering Plymouth’s Living Lab project through our partnership with Livewell Southwest, and it’s exciting news this will one of the largest ‘living labs’ in the world.

“Projects like this demonstrate the real, tangible impact partnership working can bring about, for local people as well for innovative technology companies, and I’m delighted PCH is leading the way in demonstrating this.”



Find out more on our website



# Plymouth Pride 2024



## This year, Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) teamed up with Plymouth Pride as a Pride Community Champion sponsor.

PCH pitched up in the Rainbow Village at 'Pride in The Park', one of the top Pride events in the UK organised by Plymouth Pride CIC.

Plymouth Pride CIC is a group of volunteers from across our city with a shared goal of delivering the greatest Pride events Plymouth has seen, and to change the narrative that Plymouth doesn't feel safe for LGBTQIA+ and minority communities.

Members of staff from PCH were on hand to manage a stall within the Rainbow Village alongside other local organisations and businesses and other stalls, exhibitions and activities ran by local LGBTQIA+ organisations.

Ryan Huws, Communities Worker at PCH facilitated the stand at Plymouth Pride this year, organising a group of staff who volunteered at the event to engage with our residents and the local community.

**Ryan said:** "It was a colourful fun day in the sun. As part of the PCH consultation, we talked to hundreds of people, and I'm now looking forward to reading all the collected feedback. It was great to see PCH have such a strong presence on the field".

Lou, a Housing Officer at PCH volunteered at Plymouth Pride and thoroughly enjoyed the event.

**Lou added:** "I wanted to represent PCH at Pride this year as I feel it is important that Plymouth Community Homes let our residents know that we support and are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

"Home should be a safe space for people but unfortunately there are still large amounts of the LGBTQ+ community that report that they don't feel safe in their homes and feel isolated and excluded. As a Social Landlord we want to make sure that our LGBTQ+ residents do feel safe and can engage in the wider community and representing PCH at the event is the start of that process of finding out what we can do to support this."



**Jo, Project Manager in the Development Team, said:**

"It was fantastic to attend Plymouth Pride alongside other local organisations and businesses.

"We were there to ask the big question, 'How can social landlords support LGBTQIA+ residents.' As one of the biggest employers in the city and the biggest landlord, it is important that PCH is seen in the community we live and work in, and that employees and residents who identify as LGBTQIA+ feel supported by PCH. Nobody should feel unsafe or unsupported in either their workplace or their home."

**Jo Steel, Resident Involvement Coordinator, added:**

"We took advantage of our presence at this event as an opportunity to start conversations around what social housing landlords can do to support LGBTQIA+ communities."



# PCH in Bloom

## Pauline's Cecil Street Planter

Over the last four years, Pauline, a PCH resident living in the city centre, has developed a communal garden where she has planted and grown an array of beautiful, vibrant flowers including, roses, honeysuckle, lilies, busy lizzies (impatiens) - even nurturing a tree.

Pauline has lived in the same block of flats in Cecil Street for over 50 years and loves to be outside with her dog, whether it's tending to her garden or just to sit and enjoy her space with a puzzle, as well as appreciating the garden views she enjoys from her kitchen and dining room windows.

Residents living in the block also benefit from the effort that Pauline has put in to establishing the garden, and this gives her a real sense of delight and satisfaction.

**Pauline said:** "After losing my husband, I have really enjoyed getting into gardening to take my mind off things, and I am so proud of the planter and the different flowers that I have introduced.

"I am football mad, and this year I have chosen red and white busy lizzies for England!

"My favourite flower is a rose, and every three months I visit a garden centre with my neighbour Michael to replenish the seasonal flowers and to have a look around."



## Geoff's Blooming Marvellous Garden

Last year we featured a story about Geoff, a green-fingered sheltered housing resident living in Plympton, which proved very popular.

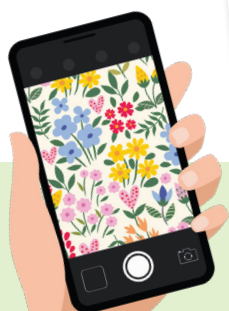
So this year, we caught up with Geoff again to find out how his garden was holding up in the wet and windy spring and summer weather we've had during 2024.

Geoff's garden is his pride and joy, and despite turning 80 in May 2023, he prunes it every day, no matter the weather, to keep his flowers in the best condition possible.

**Geoff said:** "The unseasonable weather that we have experienced this year has been terrible. There's been wind, rain, thunder, frost and more recently a bit of sunshine, so it has been hard to keep on top of the garden.

"When you visited me last year, the daffodils were in bloom, and they filled the garden to no end. As they came out so early this year, you will see that they have sadly gone now until next year, which is a huge shame, but I am hoping the rest of the garden will bloom in the coming months.

"I look forward to enjoying the warmer weather in the garden with my wife and our neighbours."



Send us photos of your flowers and garden to [news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk](mailto:news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk) for us to share on social media and in our next InTouch later this year to show residents your fabulous gardening efforts.





## Crossroads Fun & Friendship Centre

This month's Plymspirational feature is focused on a local mental health organisation called Crossroads Fun & Friendship Centre which celebrates its 30-year anniversary later this year, having helped hundreds of people across the city in an everchanging landscape.



Overcoming challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of many other of mental health services across the city, Len Russell, Project Manager along with many support staff and volunteers over the years have instilled a sense of family and belonging, where members feel safe, listened to and able to better themselves using the friends they meet at Crossroads as a support network.

Morice Baptist Church situated the North Prospect end of Ham Drive, has been supporting Crossroads since day one. What hits you straight away as you enter the church is the sheer scale of what Crossroads has to offer – the main hall itself is home to the socialising area and stage area, where members can share lunch together whilst pictures of their past achievements adorn the walls.

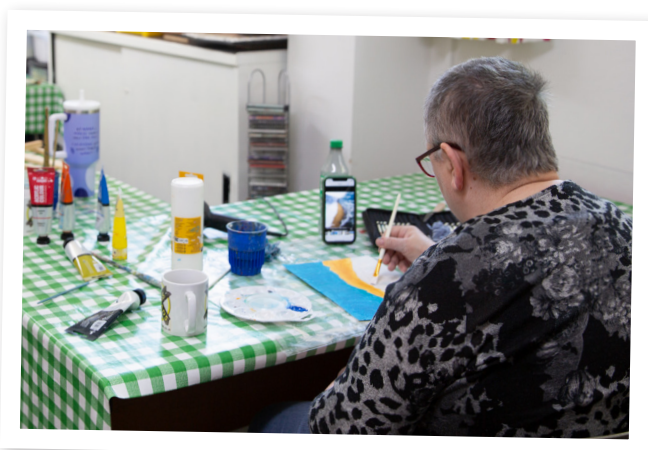
Beyond that is the kitchen where long-standing volunteer Lyn Murphy thoughtfully prepares lunch for each member and staff, then you move onto the arts & crafts room, the table tennis room, the quiet room, all the way down the hallway until you find yourself in the Church Sanctuary where you find the team sports area.

Inclusive and fun sports are a huge part of Crossroads' mantra to improve the health and wellbeing of its members, who gather weekly to take part in activities such as skittle football, balloon volleyball and other meaningful activities. The group are big fans of the Olympics and recently held a Paris-themed inclusive sports day at Brickfields athletics track.

It will come as no surprise that there is also a peaceful and tranquil garden at the rear of the Church which has been vastly improved over the years by Crossroads, Plymouth Community Homes, Plymouth City Council and volunteers from the PCH Men's Shed, with further improvements made as part of a social value initiative from kind PCH contractors Halwell and E&R.

### *So how did all this come about?*

Well, in 1993, as part of 'Care in the Community', Morice Baptist Church was approached by Devon County Council to open a drop-in centre for around 15 adults from the local area who were experiencing mental health difficulties.



After discussions took place initially with Lay Pastor Hywel Jones and with the support of Church members, Crossroads opened on 15th September 1994 as part of the Church's' Ministry.

For the first 7 years, Crossroads was based in the



Church Sanctuary which was also used as a multi-purpose area for the community. Crossroads soon outgrew this facility so, when an opportunity arose in 2002, the church members suggested a move to the other end of the building to a much-improved facility.

Crossroads is now an independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and has really grown over the years and continues to be supported by Morice Baptist Church and funded by Plymouth City Council. This partnership has proven to be very successful over these 30 years.

The organisation has continued as an enabling service supporting adults over the age of 18 with their mental health support needs and is still offering a variety of meaningful activities to help with the wellbeing of its members.

For many years Crossroads has run a much needed and successful drop-in service, however during the Covid-19 period, members were very anxious about coming back into the building in the same manner as it was before, so they changed to small support groups that have gradually increased in numbers to where they are today.

Crossroads has continued with the support groups, as everyone feels less anxious and more comfortable with the knowledge that they know who is going to be there during their session.

Len Russell, Project Manager said: "During and following Covid-19, we have noticed an increase in the need for our services. We are always looking for ways to accommodate people and have increased our sessions to cater for demand".

Tracey Archman, Senior Support Worker reveals she had always been interested in becoming more involved with Crossroads and feels blessed to be part of the team: "Every day at Crossroads is like a new day with amazing members. Everybody

has made me feel so welcome and every day you learn something new, it's like a big family."

The family atmosphere is certainly something that everyone who is involved with Crossroads agrees upon.

Len continues: "We are all very proud of our members; you are right it does feel like a family! Our members trust us, and our aim is to encourage all of them to become more independent to lead a rich and fulfilling life."

### So, what does Crossroads see for the future?

Len explains: "It seems to me that we now have more and more people of all ages experiencing mental health support needs. Over the years with closures of other face to face services, Crossroads has been needed more and more and I can't see this changing for the future!

"I would like to think that many more people will have the opportunity over the coming years to experience the fun, friendship and family atmosphere that I and many others have experienced during my time here."

Crossroads is celebrating its 30th anniversary on 15th September where they're holding a special Sunday service at 10.45am with the Lord Mayor Tina Tuohy in attendance.

If you are interested or would like to know more about Crossroads, please contact us for a visit on **01752 367880** or **info@crossroadsfafc.co.uk**

## Get involved - Community Walkabouts



At Plymouth Community Homes, there's lots of ways to get involved and have your say. In the community, ways to get involved include community walkabouts, drop-in sessions, events and projects, resident groups, make a difference days and clubs.

During our community walkabouts with your local housing officer, you can tell us what you think about your area, and what we can improve on.

We want all residents to live within neighbourhoods which are safe, clean and attractive, and we'd like you to work with us to make sure yours is well maintained.

This is an opportunity to show us something on your street or block that may need improving.

Dates of upcoming walkabouts can be found on our website.



You can join us by emailing **walkabouts@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk** or call **0808 230 6500** to speak to your Housing Team.



## Leland wins Young Employee of the Year Award

We would like to congratulate our resident Leland for winning an award this year at the Plymouth Youth Awards.

Leland was nominated in 2023 by his mum, Helen, and in June this year, Leland was singled out for praise to recognise his achievements for his outstanding work within employment.

The Young Employee of the Year award is sponsored by Babcock, and Leland won the award following his dedication to volunteering at the Saltash Community Kitchen every week. Despite travelling over an hour to Saltash on the bus, he contributes in many ways, from food preparation to dishwashing and serving customers.

The extended shortlist for his award reads: "Initially shy and reserved, Leland has blossomed into a confident individual, engaging effortlessly with both customers and staff. His reliability is commendable; the kitchen relies on his consistent presence, and he has even extended his volunteering to cover school holidays. Without Leland's invaluable support, the kitchen would face significant challenges, even closure."

16-year-old Leland was delighted to win the award. **He said:** "I volunteer at the Saltash Community Kitchen every Saturday and in the school holidays, and being able to run the kitchen, as well as helping with the serving and the cleaning has grown my confidence massively and has made me want to become a chef in the future."

"My mum told me that I was in the final for an award but at first, she didn't tell me that she put my name for it. I was soo excited!"



"I was very shocked that they read my name out of four other finalists who were up for the same award, it honestly felt like a dream."

"I have never been to the event before; we had a wonderful meal there and met a lot of kids who deserved to win. Toby Gorniak MBE was also there, it was like the Oscars for kids!"

Congratulations Leland!



## Plymouth Community Homes retains Customer Service Excellence accreditation for fourth year

Plymouth Community Homes has retained its Customer Service Excellence accreditation for a fourth consecutive year in recognition of having a customer-focused culture.

PCH also earned an additional award of 'Compliance Plus' for going above and beyond in its work in one area, whilst retaining another two Compliance Plus awards from previous audits.

The CSE award is a well-regarded national quality mark awarded to organisations following a rigorous assessment and audit process, including an on-site auditing visit during which an impartial assessor meets with staff and residents.

To earn the CSE mark, an organisation must demonstrate that it meets the requirements of the scheme and has a truly customer-focused culture, supporting residents and listening to their views.

An assessor visited PCH for two days in May, meeting with residents and staff.

The Customer Service Excellence Centre for Assessment (CfA) gave PCH a glowing report following the inspection visit, saying the organisation "continues to offer a high quality service to its tenants".

The PCH response to the Keyham incident was singled out for especial praise, and the report said it was "an example of the customer-focused culture of PCH, from the CEO through to frontline staff."

**Natasha Kirkham, Quality Assurance Manager at PCH, said:** "The CSE assessment is a very thorough process involving teams across PCH, with many staff giving up their time to meet with the assessor and talk through their work so PCH can retain this quality mark for another year."

# CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE<sup>®</sup>





Find out more on our website

# New Tenant Satisfaction Measures published for Plymouth Community Homes

In June, Plymouth Community Homes published its first ever set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures which show how the organisation is performing and what residents think of our services.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures, or TSMs, are a new set of 22 measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in April 2023 to help assess the quality of services provided by social housing landlords across England.

PCH wants to be open with its residents and share how we are performing as a landlord so our tenants and customers can hold us to account, and help us make improvements where we need to.

We have ambitions to be in the top 25% of housing landlords for customer satisfaction – and we are delighted to have achieved this in the first set of TSM results, with an Overall Satisfaction score of 85% - understood to be one of the highest results in the sector.

We've also scored well with strong performance in building safety compliance measures, and for repairs – despite major challenges with increased numbers of repairs to be delivered in the last year.

We have more to do on complaints, particularly around how we handle complaints so residents are more satisfied with how their complaint is dealt with, and on ensuring we take action when we uphold a complaint. We're also focused on improving customer perception measures of how well we handle anti-social behaviour.

**Jonathan Cowie, Chief Executive of PCH, said:** "I am very proud of our results, particularly to see PCH earning an overall customer satisfaction score of 85%, as it shows we as an organisation are doing well and residents are happy with the service we provide.

"We are by no means complacent and we want to do more – so we have already set ourselves some challenging targets for the coming year to help us improve services further."

You can view all of the TSM results on our website.

PCH will be monitoring progress against these new TSM measures on a quarterly basis, and the results will be shared on our website.

Our results are reported to the Regulator, and will be published nationally to see how PCH compares with other social housing landlords.

PCH will monitor and update its progress over the coming year as part of its work to meet the new Consumer Standards, which were also introduced in April.





# Development update

## 27 new affordable homes for Ivybridge

PCH has announced plans to redevelop a former retirement home in Ivybridge working in partnership with Ivybridge Town Council and South Hams District Council to create more affordable homes for the town.

PCH has consulted with local residents during a pre-planning stage about its plans to redevelop the former retirement home Butterpark in Ivybridge and replace it with 27 affordable homes, which would be prioritised to those with a local connection to the area to meet the specific needs of the community.

The proposals involve building a block of eight flats designated for residents with learning disabilities, and creating 12 one-bedroom flats which could be made available for social rent, whilst up to seven two/three-bedroom homes are built and sold for shared ownership through PCH's sales brand, SO Living.

## Land secured to deliver 117 affordable homes in Sherford

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) will be delivering more affordable homes after purchasing land in Sherford from Vistry Group, via its subsidiary businesses Bovis Homes and Linden Homes.

117 homes will be built on the land that has been secured within 'Phase 2D' in Sherford, located on the edge of Plymouth, containing 350 homes, acquiring 51 homes from Countryside Properties (Bovis) and 66 homes from Linden Sherford LLP (Countryside Partnerships).

This £32.3m development which has already received detailed planning consent should deliver a range of properties including 2-bedroom flats, and 2, 3, 4 & 5 bedroom homes and of these, 75 properties will be made available for social rent, and 42 homes will be offered for shared ownership purchase through the organisation's sales brand SO Living.

As the scheme is already set to provide 20% of the new homes as affordable housing, the 117 homes that have been acquired with help from Homes England grant funding are additional affordable homes which will not be subject to any local connection (S106) restrictions and applicants will be received via Devon Home Choice.

## 125 new affordable homes in Southway

Earlier this year, PCH submitted plans to build 125 much-needed new affordable homes in Plymouth after buying a large site in the north of the city.

The plans were submitted to the council following a community consultation held in March 2024 to gather feedback from local people, which has helped to inform and shape the final plans.

The application outlines PCH's proposals to create 125 new, energy efficient affordable homes which will result in lower running costs and reduced energy bills for residents and include accessible and wheelchair standard homes.

The scheme would include a mixture of detached, semi-detached homes and apartments in four buildings of three-storeys:

- 36 x 1 bed apartments
- 41 x 2 bed homes
- 38 x 3 bed homes
- 10 x 4 bed homes

Of the 125 homes, 81 properties will be made available for social rent for local people in housing need, and 44 homes will be offered for shared ownership purchase through SO Living.

# Universal Credit Managed Migration



The final roll out of Universal Credit Managed Migration will take place from September 2024. This is the transferring of claimants in receipt of legacy benefits, such as Housing Benefit or Income Support, to Universal Credit.

If you are in receipt of a legacy benefit and under pension age (66 years old) you will receive a Migration Notice and you will need to switch to Universal Credit.

Don't forget - we're here to help you with any problems or concerns, and PCH has a team of Incomes officers available to provide practical help or advice.

Legacy benefits include:

- Housing Benefit
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

## What to look out for

You will receive a 'Universal Credit Migration Notice' letter through the post from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) if your claim needs to be transferred.

Tax Credit claimants will receive this letter from the DWP with a HMRC logo on it.

This notice letter is important as it will tell you that your existing benefits are stopping, and you need to make a claim for Universal Credit.

It will also tell you what you need to do and by when.

You may receive a leaflet telling you to get ready for Universal Credit – if the leaflet you get doesn't have a deadline on it, it isn't your migration notice.

Wait until you receive your migration notice before making your application.

If you apply before you get your migration notice, you will not receive any Transitional Financial Protection. This could mean that you will be worse off.

If in any doubt please call our Financial Inclusion and Income Recovery team on 0800 0280350 who will be happy to help you.

You can find more information about the Move to UC from the UK Government website.



## Do you have home contents insurance?

Did you know that Plymouth Community Homes offers a home contents insurance scheme where premiums can be paid alongside your rent.

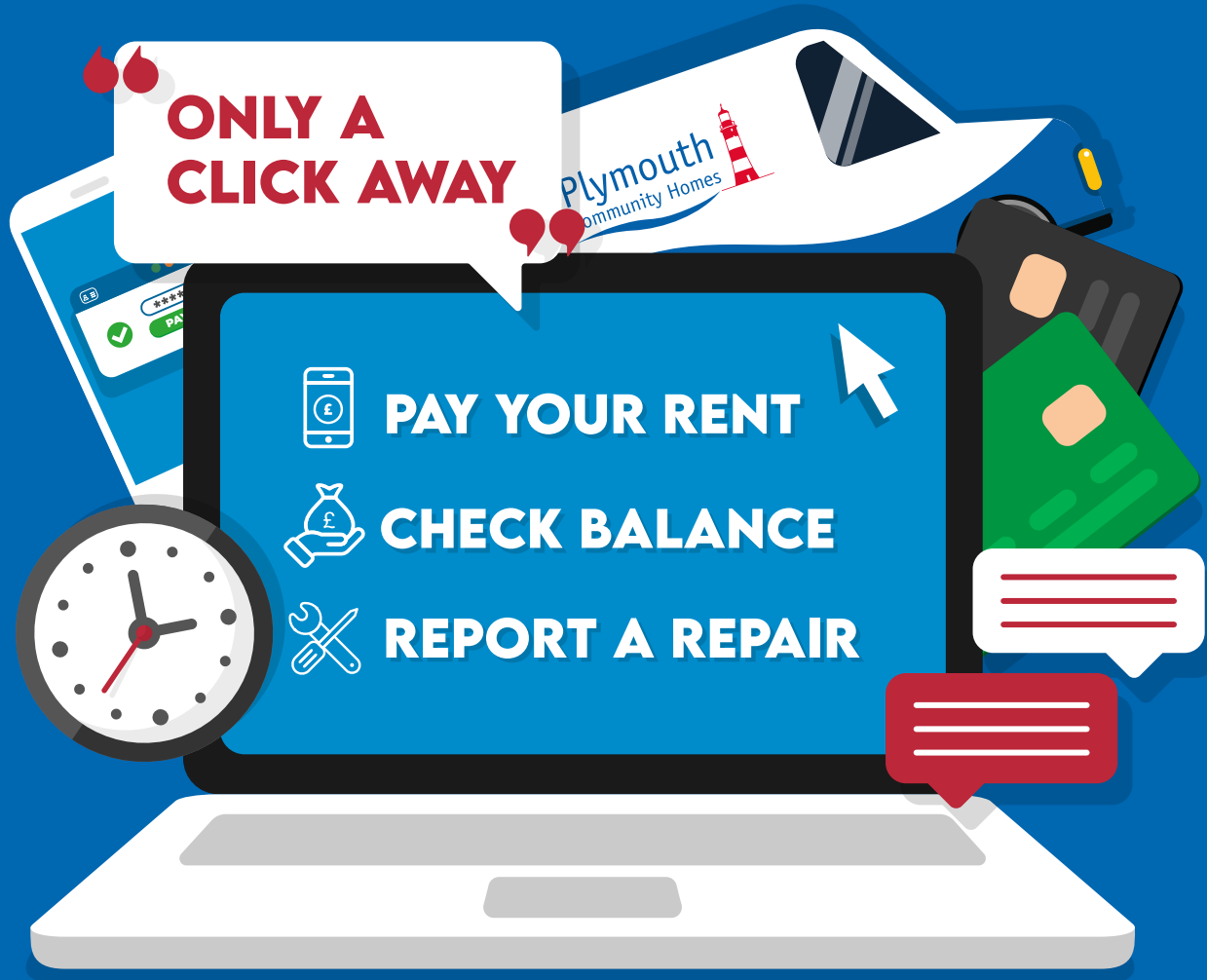
Call 0808 230 6500  
or visit

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





# 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](http://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 one of our publications, we'd love to hear it.

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

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 0808 230 6500

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