

InTouch

Issue 55 Summer 2023

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WELCOME

Welcome to the summer edition of InTouch.

We want everyone to enjoy the warmer weather, but looking after the safety and wellbeing of all our residents is a key priority for PCH. Our communal areas are there for all residents to enjoy, so please take the time to read through some guidance in this issue on how to use these spaces safely, and ensure you are mindful of your neighbours this summer.

In this edition of InTouch, we showcase a colourful new mural that can be found at Morley Court in the city centre. Art like this is so important to help brighten up and enliven our community spaces, and it's great to see how well-received the new mural has been in Plymouth.

On page four we share some exciting news about the appointment of Jonathan Cowie as new Chief Executive of PCH, taking over when our current CEO, John Clark, retires in September. We will be introducing residents to Jonathan properly in our next edition of InTouch so please do get in touch if you have any questions you'd like us to put to Jonathan.

On page 18, it's great to learn more about how eight residents were inspired to step out of their comfort zone during a Confidence and Motivation workshop organised by Plymouth Community Homes in partnership with Active Plus.

If you'd like to get involved in helping to shape how PCH is run, there are plenty of opportunities.

In this issue, we share information about how to become a PCH shareholder, and there's also a story about new Board Member Peter Nourse, as well as a tribute to long-standing Board Member, Debbie Roche, who is preparing to step down.

We hope you enjoy the magazine,



Valerie

**Valerie Lee,
Chair of the Board**



COLOURFUL New for Plymouth city

Residents and the local community have welcomed a new mural in the heart of Plymouth's city centre which has been painted to refresh the space and help prevent illegal graffiti.

The creation was designed and painted by Jordan Lauder from The Mural Company following a suggestion from Daniel Palmer, a Ranger at Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) and was commissioned by Sarah Chidgey, a Housing Officer in an effort to brighten up our city and make it a better place to live for our residents.

The mural was painted with a nature theme with a large fox, wildlife including butterflies, and stunning flowers to appeal to everyone visiting Morley Court - and it has had nothing but positive feedback so far.

The mural is situated on an external wall outside Morley Court in the West End of Plymouth, and can be accessed by Market Way or via Western Approach.

The new addition follows the installation of a bespoke metal lighthouse on Western Approach, which can be seen by Plymothians on their commute in and out of the city centre.



W MURAL

ity centre



Just like the lighthouse, PCH hopes the mural will increase footfall to the area and in turn bring business to our commercial residents in the area.

Jordan Lauder, who worked tirelessly on the new addition, said: “Sarah Chidgey noticed my paintings across the city and invited me to come and produce artwork on a blank wall outside Morley Court in the city centre and I was delighted to get on board.

“When we spoke for the first time, we talked through multiple ideas and landed on a nature theme, which we hoped would appeal to a lot of people, including PCH residents and the local community.

“I really enjoy painting foxes, so we decided it would be great to have a fox included in the mural. I then designed it to fit the space and painted it over three and a half days.

“PCH residents living at Morley Court were really interested in the painting and were coming up to me and thanking me for what I was doing which was great.

“It has sparked huge conversation within the local community which is fantastic, especially with young residents who came by asking questions about the new artwork.”

Sarah Chidgey, Housing Officer at PCH, said: “I love street art, and it is my mission to brighten up our city and reduce illegal graffiti. This wall was often tagged by graffiti so we thought it would be fantastic for residents to have a wall filled with vibrant colours and nature, rather than a tagged, dark bricked wall.

“I have seen a lot of Jordan’s artwork across the city, and as a local creative I knew he would come up with something our residents would love, and he certainly delivered.

“We spoke to residents who were so thrilled with the lighthouse and they welcomed the idea of the mural, and there has been amazing feedback from the residents and others who pass by so far.

“There is an overarching feeling that the new mural brightens up the place, makes people smile and feel good about where they live. I love the thought of residents walking into their home and thinking what a lovely view they have, rather than a blank wall which invites crime.

“I want to thank Jordan for his efforts and hope to work with him in the future.”

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPOINTED FOR PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES



Plymouth Community Homes has appointed Jonathan Cowie as its new Chief Executive, taking over when the current CEO, John Clark, retires in September.

Jonathan is currently Chief Operating Officer at Vivid Housing in Portsmouth, a role he has held for the last four years. Jonathan was previously the Chief Executive of City West Homes in London, and Chief Operating Officer of Sovereign Housing in Newbury.

During his career, Jonathan has also held senior management roles within national utility and telecoms companies and has a background of working in customer service with a focus on championing the voice of the customer.

Alongside his position at Vivid, Jonathan is a non-executive director at Magna Housing in Dorset, and for the UK Institute of Customer Service.

Jonathan Cowie said: “I am delighted to be joining PCH at the start of the organisation’s new, five-year business plan, which offers a clear vision to continue the organisation’s work to improve lives. PCH is a really strong organisation which is already making a positive difference within communities across Plymouth and beyond. I hope to continue this legacy and work in partnership with PCH’s staff,

customers and partners, existing and new, to turn the organisation’s new strategy into reality.”

Jonathan will be relocating to the area from his home in Wiltshire upon taking up the position.

Jonathan added: “I’m excited to get to know the vibrant and historic city of Plymouth better having fallen in love with the area on previous visits for work and holidays, and I look forward to becoming part of the community. Plymouth is a city which is reinventing itself through regeneration and by attracting new investment, and PCH is integral in supporting this journey.

“My ambition is to help PCH grow and thrive, so we can deliver on the organisation’s new mission and vision to truly improve lives, and for PCH to be sought out as the partner, employer and housing provider of choice for others wanting to make a difference in their local community.”

Jonathan will take over as CEO from John Clark, who retires in September following seven years in post. During his time at PCH, John has led the organisation to significant growth and success, growing turnover to £77.8million and increasing PCH’s housing assets to £552million with the development and purchase of new homes.

Valerie Lee, Chair of PCH Board, said: “We are hugely grateful to John for his leadership and passion during the last seven years, which has helped PCH become one of the top performing social housing associations in the country, delivering first-class services for people in Plymouth.

“I’m very happy to announce the appointment of Jonathan as our new Chief Executive. He joins PCH this autumn with a wealth of experience in the housing sector to lead our work in delivering the mission set out in our business plan, which is to provide a high quality, affordable home for everyone who needs one, within communities where people truly want to live.

“As the cost-of-living crisis continues, it’s never been more important for social housing landlords like PCH to support local people in housing need, and Jonathan will be a driving force to help the organisation do all we can to become outward-looking and collaborative so we can deliver real results for our customers.”

We will be introducing residents to Jonathan with a Q&A in our next edition of InTouch so you can find out more about your new CEO. Please let us know if you have any questions that you would like to ask him by emailing them to us via news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk.





86 NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR PLYMOUTH

Plymouth Community Homes has completed the purchase of 86 homes in the city which will be made available as affordable rent and shared ownership for local people in housing need.

PCH is investing an estimated £21.5 million in the overall project to purchase and refurbish the former Ministry of Defence (MOD) estate at Hillcrest Close in Plympton, which includes 86 three-bedroom homes, 80 garages and a community centre.

The acquisition has been made possible thanks to grants from Homes England and Plymouth City Council totalling £7.6million to help fund the overall project cost.

The sale completed on 31st May 2023 after PCH purchased the estate from Annington. The properties have been leased by the MOD from Annington since 1996.

PCH now intends to refurbish the properties. Eleven are currently occupied, and these residents are now PCH tenants.

Aware of the situation previously facing these tenants, their local MP Sir Gary Streeter strongly supported the purchase by PCH, which will bring to an end years of uncertainty about the future of their tenancies. PCH will be able to offer the existing residents new, assured tenancies, giving them long-term security in their homes.

A further 53 homes will be made available for social rent for local people in housing need, and 20 will be offered for shared ownership sale through PCH's sales brand SO Living.

The purchase also includes a large community centre which PCH hopes to let to a local business or community group.

Andrew Lawrie, Head of Development at Plymouth Community Homes, said: "We're delighted to have successfully completed the purchase of the Hillcrest estate with the help of the grant funding agreed from Homes England and Plymouth City Council.

"Hillcrest is a popular residential estate in a sought-after area of Plymouth and will now provide local people with a large number of spacious, three-bed family homes for social rent and shared ownership purchase.

"There is a growing need in Plymouth for good quality, affordable social housing so the Hillcrest estate purchase will help us enormously to ease pressure on the waiting list of people needing a secure home, many of whom are having to manage in temporary accommodation.

"It will also be rewarding to give this well-known estate a new lease of life, with many of the homes having sat empty for some time."

The area is already popular with families, with the estate located close to both Chaddlewood and Glen Park Primary schools, and close to other amenities in the popular Plympton area.

Lipstone Crescent tree planting

Residents living in Lipstone Crescent can enjoy a brighter outlook after 26 trees were planted outside their properties thanks to a partnership between Plymouth Community Homes and Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest.

In 2021, Plymouth was chosen to become England's 11th Community Forest and so far, the project has seen thousands of new trees planted locally, stretching from the heart of the city to the edge of Dartmoor, encompassing 1,900 hectares of land and helping to establish a range of different forest habitats.

Unlike traditional forests, community forests are spread out across a mix of community woodland, private woodland, on streets, urban woodland, wooded habitat corridors, and hedgerows.

This year, Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest has over 28 schemes happening across the city, with most already completed. Several schemes were delivered at PCH properties last season, including at Lynher House in Devonport.

The trees planted at Lipstone Crescent include Acer platanoides, Princetown Gold, Birch Holland, Pyramid Hornbeam and many more.

Joe Berryman, Arboriculturist at Plymouth Community Homes, said:

"We considered Lipstone Crescent was a good site for increased tree cover after we noticed the area had a low number of trees in relation to other communities we look after.

"In addition, the green spaces at Lipstone Crescent have a good variety of sizes and gradients so we were able to make use of modern botanical practices, and involve trees that can tolerate the harsher conditions found in a city environment.



"This includes trees which grow mainly upwards rather than outwards, and trees that can withstand extreme temperatures and longer dry spells.

"As a result, the trees should be more resilient, not block light to the buildings, and not need to be replaced as regularly, helping us to reduce the local impact of climate change."

Mark Bailey, Housing Officer at Plymouth Community Homes, said:

"The trees have made a positive visual impact to the green space at Lipstone Crescent and we have received comments from residents who are delighted with the new additions.

"I believe our collaboration with the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest will continue to benefit our residents greatly, and our planning and delivery of the next schemes within this project will be vital for our city."

Stephen Hill, Natural Infrastructure Officer at Plymouth City Council, said:

"It's been another rewarding season for the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest, over 6,000 trees have been planted across the city this winter and we think it's safe to say Plymouth is a much greener place because of the hard work demonstrated by everyone involved.

"Working in collaboration with Plymouth Community Homes, Always Apples, and local residents, a new orchard, edible hedgerow and tree planting took place in Lipstone Crescent as well as Lynher House, breathing life back into spaces for both people and wildlife to enjoy.

"We are already excited for next year's tree planting, so spades at the ready and follow Nature Plymouth on Facebook for updates!"



Geoff's blooming marvellous garden



Green-fingered resident Geoff has lived in sheltered housing in the city for over three years, and during that time he has added over 170 pots of flowers to his beloved garden.

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

Geoff said: "I love my garden, especially at this time of year. I enjoy working in my garden, and I can't just sit down and do nothing all day, that's not me. It keeps my mind alert and going, and I need that."

"I have also added a water feature and an aviary, so I get visits from many species of birds, including blue tits and woodpeckers. My wife and I enjoy sitting outside watching them when the weather is nice."



PCH in bloom

July and August is jam-packed with beautiful flowering plants, with many flowers at their peak and we want to see your garden in bloom.

Send us photos of your flowers and garden to 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.

Follow us on Instagram





Luna's fund

*"Each new life, no matter how fragile or brief...
forever changes the world."
- Author unknown*

On 29 November 2017, Luna Valentina Conroy was born sleeping to first-time parents, Aimee and Ryan.

At only 23 and 25 years old, the couple had no idea how to process their feelings, or who to turn to for support.

As they prepared to lay their daughter to rest in the lead up to what should have been their first Christmas as a family, Aimee and her husband started planning a new charity, based on their own experiences.

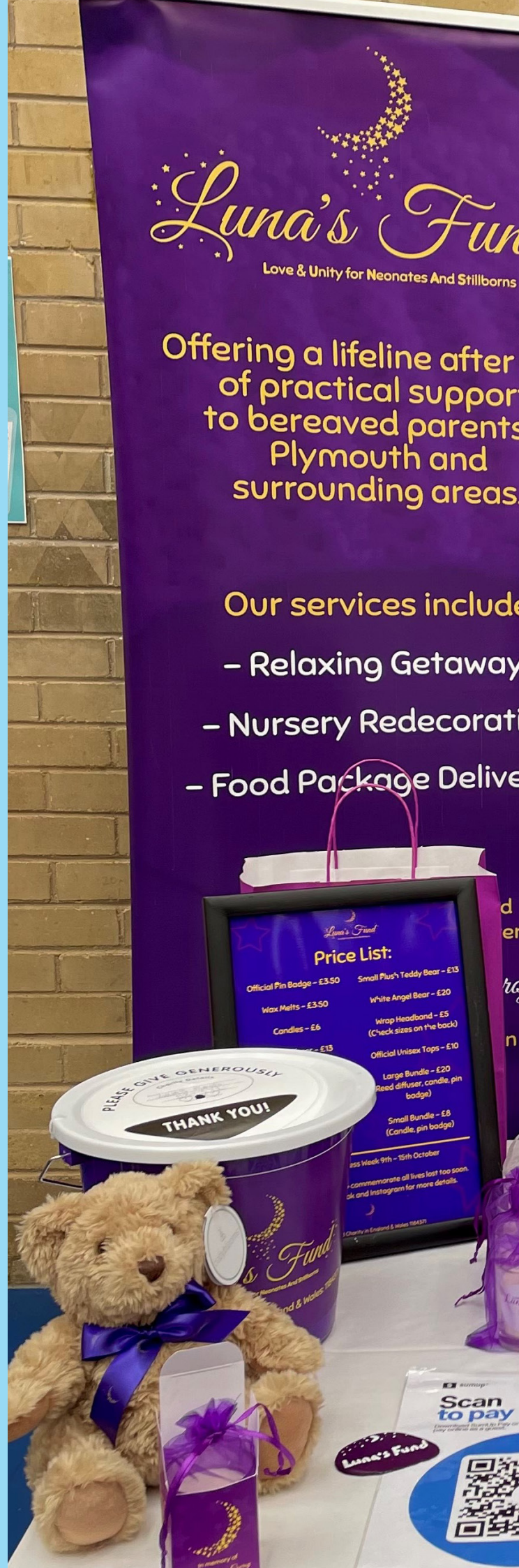
Luna's Fund was borne out of a tragedy, offering hope and support to positively aid the mental and physical health and wellbeing of bereaved parents upon the loss of their newborn child – something that no parent should ever have to experience.

Aimee explains: "When we lost Luna, we felt lost. We lacked purpose and we didn't know what to do. We had all of this love with nowhere for it to go. We used the maternity money we had saved to get away on a holiday to try and escape our reality, which is where the inspiration for our relaxing getaways came from.

"Some days we talked endlessly, and others we could barely string together a sentence together, especially during the time of year with those dark days and nights leading up to Christmas. We always felt there was something we needed to do, something we could channel all of our time, love and energy into, in order to help anyone else who had to go through this.

"We based all of our support services and ideas for the charity from our own personal experience, things we felt were lacking during our time of need."

Knowing that they needed money behind them to be able to start offering their services, fundraising started in a small way with Ryan's 18-year-old brother completing a sponsored walk on Dartmoor with some friends.





“...something we could channel all of our time, love and energy into...to help anyone else who had to go through this.”

Aimee and Ryan hand painted their logo onto an old bed sheet and the fundraising snowballed from there. Soon Aimee and Ryan were amazed by the generosity of people and their offers of support, and within 18 months in January 2020, the charity had raised enough money to help its first family.

“When we helped our first family, it made all of the difficult times and the struggles behind the scenes and overwhelming emotions during these 18 months truly worth it,” Aimee explained.

“They also became our first ‘pregnancy after loss family’ – where we offer help and support to a bereaved family who are pregnant after their loss by offering private antenatal scans and support during a really anxious and worrying time for parents.

“From there, we’ve managed to help 12 families. We’re grateful that the families we help get involved in our fundraising activities and their support is paid forward to future families who experience the pain of loss.”

The charity is run by a small network of close friends and family. Luna’s Fund has recently employed Aimee on a part time basis.

Ryan, Luna’s grandparents Steve, Sally and Debbie sit on the board of Trustees along with Kate, who is mum to Ayla, a family the charity has supported, and most recently, Jonathan who is a mutual friend and a lifelong supporter.

The trustees offer the perspectives of grandparents, a mum who has been on the receiving end of the charity’s support, and also ensure an external perspective from Jonathan, who hasn’t experienced loss.

Luna’s Fund offers emotional support through counselling services, but it’s the extra touches that sets the charity apart in the personalised

packages they put together for each different family.

Aimee said: “Relaxing getaways are the most popular and requested service. From our own, first-hand experience, we know that the opportunity to escape for a few nights is something invaluable, and at the moment few people can afford or think about it, having already paid out money to buy so many things for the baby such as cots or prams. Most of these getaways are actually sponsored by the previous family, and they share a personalised card with the name of the child they have lost, so each family we support knows they are not alone in going through this loss.

“It’s our ambition to buy our own ‘Luna’s Lodge’ in the future to host families on a getaway, but for now we are able to offer a log cabin or hotel getaway in Cornwall for a few nights for families to be away from it all and process what’s happened. Parents can close the door on the outside world and escape at the log cabins or they can be looked after and pampered at a hotel, and not have to think about even making a drink.

“Food package deliveries are also important – it may be a time where food is the last thing on your mind, and grief takes up so much energy that it’s important to keep our bodies fuelled so we can cope as best we can. It’s not just about the food either – it gives people breathing space between them and the real world. The last thing you might want to do is pop to the shops, see the neighbours or bump into someone you know, where you will inevitably be asked some difficult questions as people may not know what you’re going through. We need to help you look after your body, as you’ve just grown a beautiful baby and you need nourishment and energy to fight through another day.

“Nursery redecoration or restoration of this room is another service to help families who are struggling to walk back into that precious nursery and see a daily reminder of what they are missing. For some, it’s their favourite room in the house, full of warmth, love and happier times, but for others it can be triggering, and often the door to this room can be closed for months. We have friendly painters and decorators who will help redecorate the nursery for us.”

Ryan and Aimee have helped nearly 30 families since they started Luna’s Fund three years ago and there’s no signs of the couple slowing down. Aimee has recently been appointed CEO, and with her father who is the Treasurer having recently retired, they are looking into grants and local initiatives to expand the charity as part of a longer-term strategy to expand their services to Exeter & Truro and the wider South West.

With family and friends having run the Plymouth Half Marathon on behalf of the Fund, the charity team hosted their Charity Dinner & Dance Evening in June, which will be followed by a sponsored skydive on 6 August this year.

For more information, please visit the website www.lunasfund.com



PCH to support charity in memory of popular colleague



Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) has teamed up with the Motor Neurone Disease Association (MND Association) for 12 months of charity fundraising in memory of a much-missed and popular staff member, Lisa Goodman.

Staff chose to nominate the association as its Charity of the Year for 2023 with the cause being especially close to their hearts after Lisa, a long-standing member of staff at PCH, sadly passed away from the disease earlier this year.

The charity supports people who are living with motor neurone disease (MND) and those affected by the disease. Support doesn't just extend to sufferers, with a network of help and support available for families, friends and carers.

PCH will be raising money for the volunteer-run Plymouth branch, to ensure that any funds raised can be used to help people in the region.

MND affects up to 5,000 adults in the UK at any one time and there is a 1 in 300 risk of getting MND across a lifetime. With MND, messages from the motor neurones gradually stop reaching the muscles. This leads the muscles to weaken, stiffen and waste, which can affect how you walk, talk, eat, drink and breathe. Some people also get changes to their thinking and behaviour, but the disease affects everyone differently.

The MND Association provides a helpline, equipment loans, financial support grants and a communication aid service, as well as care centres and community services, which PCH's donations will go towards.

Helen Mackie, Regional Fundraiser at the MND Association, visited Plumer House to meet PCH Chief Executive John Clark, as well as members of the Income Recovery & Financial Inclusion team which Lisa worked within.

John Clark said: "We are delighted to select the Motor Neurone Disease Association as our charity of the year for 2023 and hand over a £500 starting donation. It is a pleasure to be able to support the Plymouth group in achieving its three aims to financially help to improve care and support for people with MND, their families and carers in Plymouth.

"After losing a beloved staff member to MND earlier this year, we hope to raise vital funds to support other local families who are being impacted by this terrible disease."

Helen Mackie said: "We are truly excited to support all PCH's wonderful fundraising plans as staff generously raise much needed funds and awareness of this cruel disease. Without this incredible fundraising MND Plymouth simply would not be able to provide its vital support and services locally.

"With the help of Plymouth Community Homes, we will be able to continue to provide regular support group meetings, vital 1:1

emotional support, and financial grants to help manage the financial burden of the disease as well as helping fund essential home adaptations and grants to improve quality of life. Together we will make a real difference to local families affected by this devastating disease."

Lisa played a big part in the Income Recovery & Financial Inclusion team at PCH for a number of years and is sadly missed by her colleagues who are keen to raise money for the charity in her memory.

PCH raised over £3000 for Gables Dogs and Cats Home and Woodside Animal Sanctuary in 2022 / 2023, amidst the cost of living crisis which left many facing heart-breaking decisions about their pets.

In previous years, PCH has supported several charities including St. Luke's Hospice, Devon and Cornwall Food Action, Age UK, Jeremiah's Journey and many more.



YOU SAID

WE DID

SPOTLIGHT ON WHITLEIGH

We've reintroduced our regular **You Said, We Did** feature to help update residents about changes we've made in response to your feedback.

This quarter, we're looking at our new Neighbourhood Action Plan for Whitleigh, and how we address incidents of ASB in the area.

Every year, we ask residents what they want to see happen in their area. We use this information to create a Neighbourhood Action Plan for the area to improve it with your help. This past year, one of the neighbourhoods we concentrated on was Whitleigh.

Read through below to see what residents asked for, and what we did as a result.

YOU SAID

Improve cleanliness, reduce littering within the area

Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Continue to build on community engagement

Promote health and wellbeing in the area

WE DID

- Continued to carry out regular estate inspections to keep gardens and estates clean and tidy.
- Liaised with Plymouth City Council to report any fly-tipping and issues of cleanliness.
- Tackled the issue of dogs fouling in communal areas and gardens by tracing the responsible dog-owning residents.

- Worked with supporting agencies to support residents reporting ASB.
- Continued our excellent working relationship with the local policing team, using a joined-up approach to resolve ASB in the area.
- Increased promotion of the ways residents can report ASB and how to contact us – which includes through the NoiseApp, email, text, our Out of Hours line, MyPCH, and social media.

- Started to hold regular open mornings at Four Greens Community Centre, so residents can drop-in and speak to us about anything.
- Advised residents when they sign up with PCH about local support agencies and make referrals where needed.
- Held several community events, including at Christmas and Easter.
- Regularly asked residents for feedback, taking into consideration their views and thoughts before making community-based decisions.

- Spoke to residents about our New Home, New You scheme at sign-up.
- Made referrals to partner agencies when required.
- Understood that safe and well-maintained homes promote good health and wellbeing, so worked closely with our repairs team to ensure repairs are carried out with support for vulnerable residents where needed.
- Encouraged residents to get involved with our Communities Team and promoted all of our courses, as well as advising how to get involved with PCH.

Resident satisfaction stats



In May, Plymouth Community Homes received 139 positive responses to our automated feedback text following the completion of a repair. A selection of the feedback given can be found below:

“Very satisfied he was very diligent and professional.”

“More than happy, thank you.”

“Electrician was excellent, very friendly. And dutifully did his work. 5*”

“Very satisfied. Plumber was polite, respected the property and fixed the leak.”

“I am very happy with the standard of work. The carpenter was polite and courteous and got on with the job of building and securing my new gate.”

“I am very satisfied with the work carried out by the electrician today.”

If you would like to pay a compliment to one of our members of staff, please visit the ‘contact’ section on our website and fill out an enquiry form.

Alternatively, if you would like to make a complaint, visit our ‘make a complaint’ website page for more information.

Efford Community Event

Dozens of PCH residents enjoyed the Efford Community Event held last month, with High View School transformed into a place of entertainment. The event was a great success, filled with a range of stalls, face-painting, bouncy castles, animals, mini golf, and much more.

Not only did the occasion benefit from the glorious weather, but it also witnessed the efforts of our amazing PCH staff, who set up a special stall giving out free toys. These toys, including teddies, dolls, and play equipment, were generously donated by the PCH Reuse Centre.

The PCH Reuse Centre plays a pivotal role in our sustainability mission, collecting large bundles of children's toys and household items left behind by residents in PCH properties. Rather than discarding these items, the Reuse Centre recycles the items, cleaning and restoring them, providing an avenue for sustainability and reducing waste. By transforming previously loved toys, the Reuse Centre breathes

new life into them and enables us to give them away to local children and families who can enjoy them.

Donna Vickers, Environmental Services, said: “The Efford Community event was amazing, the atmosphere was great, the weather was beautiful, there were lots of smiley faces and it was one of the busiest toy giveaways we’ve done to date.

“We actually almost ran out of toys after an hour and half and we had to go back and get some more, it was so popular! As always, the smiles on the faces of the children were priceless and again we had such good feedback from the adults too, they couldn’t believe we were giving it all away for free. It’s just fantastic and so rewarding to be a small part of something that can bring so much joy and make such a big difference to so many people!”

Throughout the day, PCH staff attending the event engaged with the community, meeting new faces and strengthening relationships. This event provided an opportunity for community members to come together.

One PCH resident said: “It’s been a wonderful day out with some lovely weather, it brings the community together, and have seen so many familiar faces. The kids are happy too, they now have a bunch of new toys to take home.”



Get Summer Ready!

Welcome the warmer weather with open arms and get ready to enjoy your shared outdoor spaces. We want you to have a fantastic time while also being mindful of your neighbours and prioritising safety. To ensure that everyone has a great experience, we have some friendly reminders about what you can and cannot use in the communal areas.



Swimming and paddling pools, as well as hot tubs, are not allowed in communal areas. This rule is in place to prevent any potential risks to children or other residents.



Please note the current **hosepipe ban** that is currently in effect, which includes a ban on using hosepipes to fill swimming pools & hot tubs, watering gardens and cleaning cars. Please be advised that the fine for breaking this law is £1000.



When using **barbecues**, please ensure that they are never left unattended while lit, cooking, or cooling.

Additionally, barbecues should not be used on balconies, and they should be kept away from sheds, fences, trees, shrubs, or garden waste.



Trampolines and any fixed or temporary play equipment, including slides and swings, are not permitted in communal gardens. This rule is in place to guarantee a safe environment for everyone.



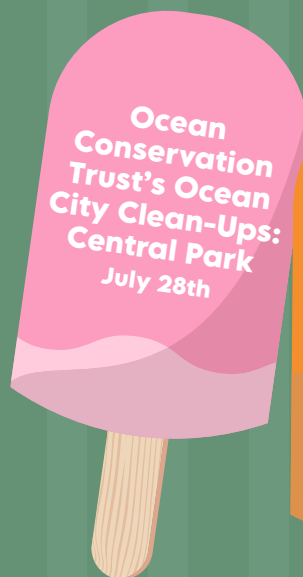
Please remember to store any **garden furniture** after each use and refrain from leaving it in the communal garden to ensure the safety of all residents.

Gas cylinders should be stored away from direct sunlight, and after use, both the barbecues and cylinders should be put away and not left in communal areas. Make sure to allow barbecue coals or charcoal to cool down before disposing of them, and always dispose of all rubbish and packaging responsibly.

Free Days Out in Plymouth This Summer

As the warm weather of summer approaches, Plymouth becomes a hub of activity. With its stunning coastline, rich history, and vibrant culture, there's never a shortage of things to do locally over the summer.

Here is a list of some exciting days out - and the best part is they're all free!



We appreciate it may be frustrating not being able to use pools or play equipment during the summer but the communal areas are there for all residents, from the very young to the elderly, and we have to ensure everyone stays safe.

Our Tenancy Management team will be actively monitoring the communal areas and removing any equipment that is not permitted. If you have any doubts about what you can and cannot use, please contact your Housing Officer, who will be more than happy to assist you.

If you have any further questions or need additional information, feel free to reach out. Enjoy your summer!



While the evenings can still become chilly, we want to remind you to exercise caution when using **mini heaters**. Always make sure to purchase products with a British Standard and CE Mark (see below) and avoid placing bags or shopping near heaters. Position them high up, away from pets and children, and never leave them unattended. Please remember to switch off the heaters at night.

Lastly, don't forget to **protect yourself from the sun**. Remember to wear sun cream, a hat, and sunglasses, and stay hydrated while enjoying the beautiful weather.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME A VIRTUAL RESIDENT ADVISOR?



We've created a virtual advisory panel of residents to discuss topics and story ideas so we can get to know what sort of advice, information and support our residents would like to see shared by PCH and ensure we're fully engaged with residents with their regular input into our publications.

As well as being involved in ideas for InTouch and our other newsletters, the VRA will serve as a sense check for PCH and our communications – ensuring that we send letters and documents which read well.

The VRA held its first meeting in January and discussed a number of topical issues, looking at the type of content we share with our residents.

The VRA is part of our commitment to the Together with Tenants charter to strengthen the relationship between residents and social housing providers, as a result of the Social Housing White Paper.

Jay Vickers, Senior Communications Officer, said:

"We've set up a great panel of residents to form the new VRA, with a mixture of people who have a blend of different backgrounds and experiences, all of which we can learn from. They are keen to start and ensure residents' views will feed in to the content of our external publications. It's important that residents' views are heard and that our customers feel listened to about the issues that matter."

If you'd like to find out more or be part of the group email news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk or call us on **0808 230 6500** and ask for the Communications and Marketing Team.



Major grant to fund energy improvement

Plymouth Community Homes has been awarded a Government grant of £5.6 million to help fund major energy improvements to 600 of our homes in Plymouth.

PCH was successful in its bid for a grant from the second wave of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), which was co-ordinated and secured through Plymouth City Council along with a grant for fellow social housing association LiveWest.

In total, 725 homes across the city will benefit from more than £7m of investment in Wave 2 of the fund as part of £800m of funding allocated across England to help ensure thousands of social homes can be upgraded to reach an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C-Rating.

PCH will receive the £5.6m of grant funding and contribute a further £8.6m of our own funds to enable a

£14.2m decarbonisation project to be rolled out to 600 homes in the city over the next two years.

A range of energy-efficiency measures will be installed in our social homes, including external wall insulation, cavity insulation and double glazing, and some homes will also be fitted with solar panels and air source heat pumps. The improvements will help residents to save money on their energy bills and heating costs and make properties warmer, dryer and more energy efficient, as well as reducing their carbon footprint.

John Clark, Chief Executive of Plymouth Community Homes, said: "It's fantastic news we have secured £5.6m of funding in the second wave of the SHDF which we will match-fund ourselves.

"This will help us to make 600 of our social homes in Plymouth more energy efficient, which will in turn

help our tenants to reduce their energy bills and keep their homes warm, dry and comfortable, as well as reducing carbon emissions.

"We are grateful for the support of the council in co-ordinating and securing this funding to enable these vital works to go ahead."

Plymouth City Council will administer the funds whilst PCH and LiveWest will be responsible of the delivery of the work. LiveWest will receive £1.5m from Wave 2 of the SHDF and contribute a further £1.8 million from its own funds to retrofit 125 of its homes.



Do you have home contents insurance?

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions.

No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen. Home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind should the worst happen.

We do not cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement or lease so it's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for to make an informed decision on whether you need one.



Call 0808 230 6500
or visit
www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

Family of resident donate £150 to community group in her memory



The family of Barbara Brooks, a Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) resident who sadly passed away, has donated £150 to a community group at a sheltered housing scheme in Plympton.

Barbara was a longstanding PCH resident who lived in PCH sheltered accommodation (also known as Housing with Support) until her death. Barbara was instrumental in adapting the communal space into the large open space it is today, but unfortunately, she passed away before the new space opened earlier this year.

Residents who are part of the 'Number 6' community group meet weekly, and they host events for all to enjoy, including Christmas parties, Easter raffles and more recently, a Coronation party.

In Barbara's memory, her son Nick and daughter-in-law Marilyn wanted to give a donation to the Number 6 group after finalising her estate, to provide the funds for a resident get-together.

The residents have continued to invite Nick and Marilyn to community group events, and provided them with exceptional support following her death.

Nick said: "The Number 6 community group was my mum's life, and it kept her going up until the very end. She loved living here and was 95 when she passed away.

"We moved in across the way before she died to be closer to her. We were welcomed into the group by all the residents with open arms. They are very supportive, and we feel extremely welcome there."

Barbara made a positive impact on a number of residents living at the sheltered scheme, with many having nothing but nice words to say about her and the legacy she has left.

Vera, a resident at the Plympton scheme, said: "She was such a lovely lady who cared for all of us. She was more than a head of the club, she was a friend, and not just any type of friend. I couldn't

help but love her, and I have so many feelings that are hard to comprehend. She was simply one of the best."

PCH Housing with Support schemes are specially tailored for people aged over 60 who have a need for accommodation with extra support.

There are self-contained flats and bungalows available to rent, and residents have access to communal spaces such as lounges and gardens. Usually, there are social activities taking place, giving the added benefit of being part of a community if that is something you'd like.

Each individual property also has an alarm system so you can summon help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Find out more about housing with support



Recognising your neighbour

If you have a truly great neighbour or know of a fantastic community champion, we want to hear from you.

We want to shine a spotlight on more of the local heroes in your street and community whose acts of kindness and neighbourliness really set them apart.

Designed as a way to celebrate those in the community who go out of their way to help others, we want to recognise those special people who enrich the lives of others and look after their community.

The person nominated needs to be a PCH resident and all entries submitted must be relevant to PCH's operating areas – so within Plymouth, Devon, and Cornwall.

Scan the QR code below or email news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk with information about your neighbour, and we will make contact with you in the coming weeks.

Scan to tell us about your neighbour!





Inspiring residents to build confidence

I can 

Eight residents were inspired to step out of their comfort zone during a Confidence and Motivation workshop organised by Plymouth Community Homes in partnership with Active Plus.

“I looked forward to coming out of my home for the first time in years.”

“Today I have benefited from working on my strength rather than concentrating on my weaknesses.”

“This has helped me go against the grain of what I know and has given me the confidence to know that it’s ok to fail sometimes, try again and don’t be afraid to ask for help.”

Those were just some of the comments made by PCH residents as individual presentations were made in the company of the Deputy Lord Mayor of Plymouth and his Consort at an event to mark the end of the successful scheme.

Rewind six weeks and it was a very different story as **Dave Street, Lead Instructor for Active Plus, explains:** “At the beginning of the course, all the team members were understandably apprehensive about what to expect. We’ve worked with them over the course of six weeks to empower everyone here to grow in confidence and resilience. “We use different scenarios to encourage residents to hone their leadership skills through teamwork.

That’s what we do at Active Plus – each of our instructors has a story that allows them to use their lived experiences of challenging situations to help and inspire others, and that’s exactly what I’ve seen here with this group.

“If I had told them at the start, that by the end of the course they would be standing up in front of a group of people – including the Deputy Lord Mayor - to talk about what they’ve learned and how they’re going to apply it to their own lives, they’d have laughed me out of the room.

“Everyone involved has graduated the course with flying colours, and we’d like to thank the Deputy Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Cllr Chris Penberthy, and Consort, Mr Darren Hartley, who gladly accepted our invitation and presented certificates to all our participants. It was nice to hear the group talk about their time on the course, and this puts a little bit of gentle pressure on them to excel.”

Residents are planning to use their new-found confidence going forward, with some looking to get into work, while for others it’s given them the chance to get out and meet new people and make friends.

Ashleigh Knowles, PCH’s Resident Learning Co-ordinator who helped deliver the course,

said: “It has been an absolute joy delivering the course. The first week everyone was a bit nervous and quiet but each week their confidence grew. They shared their interests, such as singing and playing guitar, for the group, and had personal achievements, for example getting in touch with family members for the first time in 20 years. It’s been a privilege to see the change in everyone.”

During the last presentation of the day, resident Pamela summed up the course perfectly in her own words: “On week one I was terrified about walking into a room of strangers. Now I’m a little sad that the course is coming to an end. I didn’t think this would work over six sessions, but I was wrong. I feel so much better, more in control and comfortable speaking with and meeting new people.”

PCH offers a variety of free courses to support and upskill residents, including training in first aid, computer skills and cookery. To be on the mailing list for the latest courses, visit our Learn For Free page on our website.

Free courses
for PCH
residents



Digital drop in

Are you struggling to make the most of your device? Need assistance accessing the internet? Look no further!

Join us for a relaxed and friendly support session designed to help you overcome any obstacles and learn new digital skills.

Whether you're a beginner or just need some extra guidance, our support sessions are open to all. No prior digital skills are required. Bring your own device or use one of ours. Complimentary tea and coffee included.

Join us on one of our up and coming sessions:

Tues 22nd Aug

10am – 12.30pm at PCH City Centre Shop, Frankfort Gate

Fri 15th Sept

10am – 12.30pm at The Beacon, North Prospect

Wed 11th Oct

10am – 12.30pm at Plumer House, Crownhill



Find out more
on our website



For more information contact Ashleigh Knowles on **01752 388051**
or email learnforfree@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

Goodbye and thank you, Debbie

In December, Board member Debbie Roche will be saying her goodbyes after eight years on the Board of PCH.

Debbie's contribution has been hugely valued by the organisation, and Debbie is keen to recommend joining the Board to other PCH residents.

Debbie said: "As sad as it will be, I will be leaving the PCH family with a warm glow in my heart for my Board colleagues, staff, and all of the residents I have had the wonderful opportunity to meet and work with.

"I can't begin to express how interesting the past few years have been. I have learned so much about the social housing sector - and myself. I have gained so much confidence, learned not to be afraid to question, and have developed my strategic brain. Through my position on the PCH Board, I have been presented with numerous opportunities such as talking at national conferences and being a member of national forums. I even became Vice-chair!

"But more importantly, I have learned that PCH truly has a social heart, and it puts the voice of the tenant at the core of everything it does.

"It isn't just rhetoric or a phase. Currently, the voice of the resident is high on the agenda of politicians and regulators, but it has always been held in high regard and valued at PCH.

"When I first joined the Board, I knew I could offer something around the table. But little did I realise that the skills, specialist knowledge and unique perspective I offered as a tenant - the 'lived experience' - would be an extremely valuable asset to the business, and continues to be."

If you would like to register your interest to become a resident Board Member please contact the Governance Team on governance@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk.



Becoming a PCH shareholder

PCH shareholders have a role to play in helping to shape the key strategies and policies that directly affect our residents.

We know how important it is to have people with lived experience of PCH services and communities involved in our decision-making process, and as part of our commitment to the Together with Tenants charter and our adopted Code of Governance, we continue to be committed to ensuring our residents are involved in our governance arrangements.

This includes:

- ring-fenced seats on our Customer Focus Committee



Scan for more information





INTRODUCING NEW BOARD MEMBER PETER NOURSE



In May we welcomed our newest Board Member, Peter Nourse.

Peter moved to the South West in 2002 as a Corporate Director for a local authority and quickly realised that his future lay in housing: “Housing for me was clearly the most important service we offered, as having a home is the most important thing – having a roof over your head is one of our most basic needs and provides stability, safety and has obvious links to health and wellbeing.”

Peter went on to work as Director of Assets at Clarion Housing Group, the UK’s largest housing association. He has also served on housing association and ALMO boards for over 15 years, and as Chair of the Quality of Existing Homes Group for the National Federation of Housing.

As well as his non-executive work, Peter runs his own consultancy business which provides support across the social housing sector.

Originally from South East London, Peter is a keen Charlton Athletic supporter and season ticket holder.

In his spare time Peter is an amateur golfer, a member of his local golf club and has just recently taken up

photography. But his real passion is travelling in his motorhome, which he takes to Europe at any opportunity, driving the length of France and Spain.

Peter retired in 2022 and plans on staying in the South West, which is one reason he was attracted to the PCH Board Member position.

He said: “The South West is a wonderful part of the country and I wanted to help make a difference. PCH is a good organisation with a good reputation in the housing sector, and the PCH values of ‘doing the right thing’ align with my own. So I can’t wait to get stuck into being a part of such a fantastic organisation.”



- ring-fenced seats on our Board
- resident shareholders

Becoming a Shareholding Member is easy, and shareholding membership is open to all tenants, shared owners, and leaseholders.

You just need to tell us you want to be a shareholder, and we will collect some details from you for our records. One share costs a nominal value of £1 which should be sent with your application form.

Your application will be reported to the PCH Board for approval and if approved, a share certificate and Welcome Pack will be issued to you.

There are exclusions to gaining a Shareholder Membership. If you are interested in becoming a shareholder, please scan the QR code or call the Governance Team on 0808 230 6500 for our recruitment pack.

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Word search

Ice cream flavours

- Coconut
- Strawberry
- Vanilla
- Fudge
- Rocky Road
- Cookie Dough
- Neapolitan
- Chocolate
- Pecan
- Banana
- Green Tea



Spot the difference

Spot all 10



Recipe round-up

Stuck on what to make for dinner? Here are a few ideas of meals for the whole family that are quick, easy and don't cost the earth.

Shakshuka

Ingredients

Serves 4

- 1tsp olive oil
- 2 red onions, sliced
- 2 peppers, sliced
- 1 garlic clove
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 ½ tins of 420g baked beans
- 125 baby spinach
- 4 eggs
- Crusty bread to serve

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large frying pan, add the onions and peppers and season with salt and pepper
2. Fry for 5 mins, stirring occasionally, and add in the garlic
3. Add the tomatoes and a splash of water, cook for 5 mins and stir in the baked beans, cooking for 5 mins more
4. Stir in the spinach and it will start to wilt
5. Make 4 hollows in the top and crack the eggs into them – cook for 5 mins more or until the eggs have set.
6. Serve with a generous helping of crusty bread

Chicken in peppercorn sauce

Ingredients

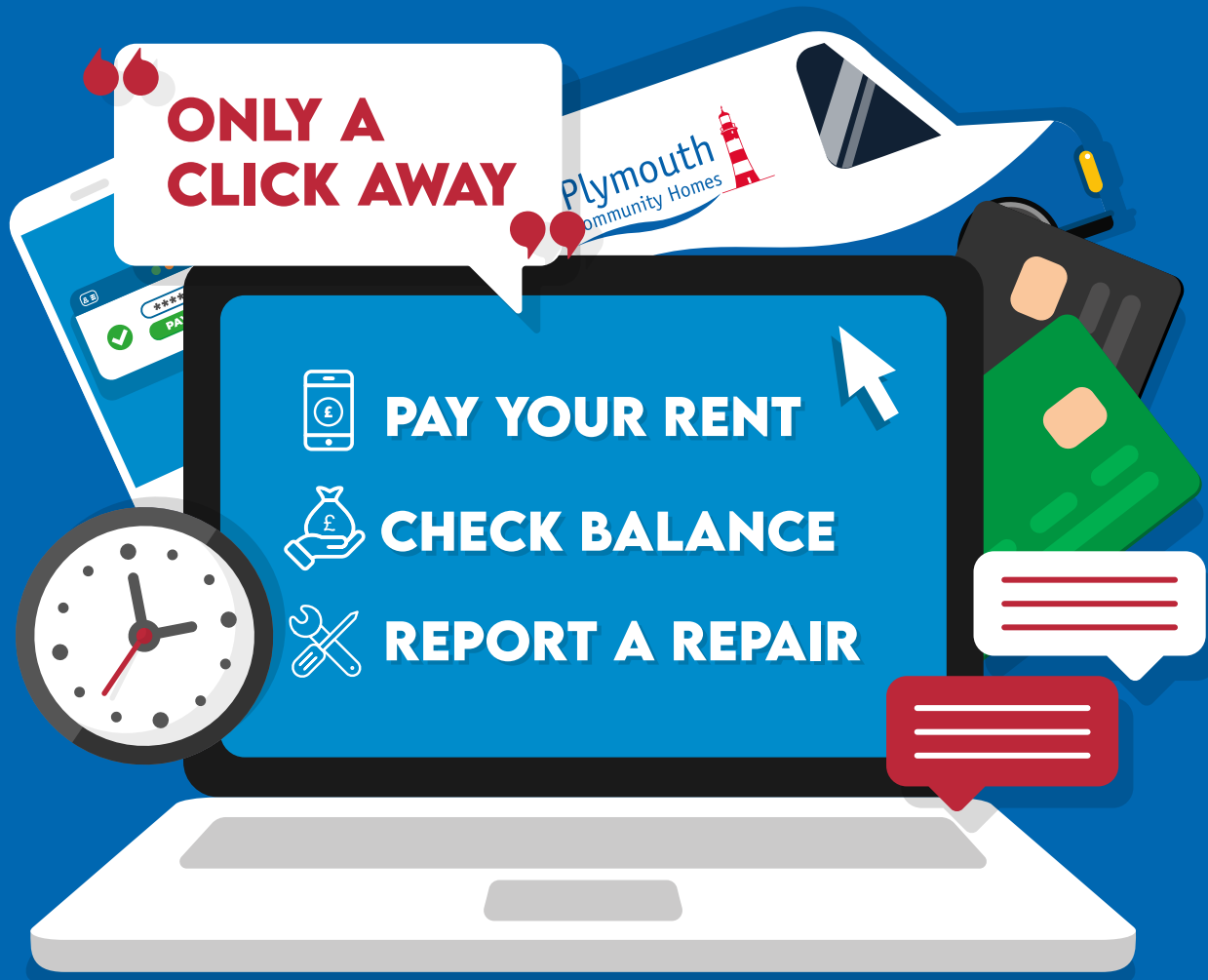
Serves 4

- 4 chicken breasts or thighs
- 6 medium carrots
- Peppercorn sauce (shop bought)
- 900g potatoes

Method

1. Preheat your oven to 220c/200c fan/gas mark 7.
2. Pop your chicken into the oven for around 30-35 mins or until cooked through
3. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil with a dash of salt
4. Trim the carrots and halve lengthways, chop them into chunks and pop them onto a baking tray with a drizzle of oil and put them in the oven for 20-25 mins or until tender, turning half-way through
5. Chop the potatoes into 2cm chunks and boil the potatoes until soft
6. Drain the potatoes and add a knob of butter, splash of milk and mash until smooth
7. Prepare your peppercorn sauce as per the instructions
8. Add your chicken onto the plate, along with your mash and carrots, and drizzle over the peppercorn sauce

SIGN UP TO MYPCH



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


mypch.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk


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

Email news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

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 0808 230 6500

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our website



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