

InTouch

Issue 64 Winter 2025



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Read InTouch online
bit.ly/PCHInTouch



Welcome to the Winter 2025 edition of InTouch

As the year comes to a close, I hope you all have a very happy and healthy winter and enjoy the festivities.

Earlier this month we were delighted to switch on the Christmas tree lights at Plumer House, inviting our residents and the local community to join us and enjoy hot chocolate and carols by our Resident Communication Advisors (RCA). The lights were switched on by representatives from our charities of the year, St Luke's Southwest and Children's Hospice South West (CHSW), alongside Dude, a PCH resident who is currently being supported by CHSW.

In this December edition of InTouch, we focus on staying well this winter and share information about wellbeing and family hubs in Plymouth, places of welcome and the support provided by One You Plymouth. Our Wellbeing Officer is available to offer support to residents through our Health and Housing project in partnership with Livewell Southwest and can be contacted on 0808 230 6500.

In our Plymspirational feature, we share the amazing work of Southway Community Group CIC, who won the 'Best Community Project' award at the Plymouth Community Awards this October in association with YMCA Plymouth and Discovery College, recognising the dedication and hard work of the group to improve the Southway Community.

We share the great news about our Reuse Centre's partnership with Jabulani, a multi-cultural food court based on Union Street in Plymouth and throw it back to the summer when Bell Group helped us to host a Summer Party through their social value contributions at Brock House, a city centre sheltered housing scheme.

In our first Communities and Partnerships update, we share an update on the Plymouth Living Lab, our involvement in the Plymouth Cold and Damp Homes Taskforce and share updates on the new colourful murals in Stonehouse, the Devonport Futures Digital Essentials Programme and introduce Carl's Boxing Stable.

Winter is a time to take extra steps to ensure you stay safe in your home, and in this edition, we share top five fire safety tips and festive fire safety information as it's important to make sure your festive decorations are safe to avoid the risk of fire.

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 or message us on Facebook, X or Instagram.



Valerie

**Valerie Lee,
Chair of the Board**

Contact details over the festive period

If you need extra support this winter, there are a number of support services you can get in touch with.

Mind

Their support line is a safe space for you to talk about your mental health. Their advisors are trained to listen to you and help you find specialist support if you need it.

Call free on **0300 102 1234** Monday to Friday between 9am to 6pm.

Age UK Advice Line

Open every day including Christmas, providing answers and reassurance to older people who have no one else to turn to.

Call free on **0800 678 1602** – 8am to 7pm.

The Silver Line

A free helpline for older people **0800 470 8090** every day 24/7.

The Samaritans 24/7

Call free on **116 123**

Time to Talk

Aims to improve well-being for people with a disability or who are deaf, by reducing loneliness and isolation.

0300 303 3691 (free phone) or text them on **0785 642 6940** during their opening hours or leave a message and they should get back to you.

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

You can call the CALM on **0800 58 58 58** (5pm–midnight every day) if you are struggling and need to talk.

Combat Stress

Treatment and support for armed forces veterans who have mental health problems.

Combat Stress's helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year - **0800 1381 619** / **combatstress.org.uk**

Read more on InTouch online

bit.ly/FestiveContact





Read more on
InTouch online



Looking after your wellbeing this winter

Would you like support with your wellbeing this winter?

To access support from our Wellbeing Officer, please contact our Health and Housing team in partnership with Livewell Southwest via healthandhousing@pch.co.uk or give us a call on **0808 230 6500**.

Staying connected with the people around you

As the nights draw in it can be easy to shut the curtains in a warm home and stay indoors. However, it is important to stay connected with other people as this can boost your wellbeing.

Good social relationships with those around you are an essential component to mental wellbeing, so try to stay in regular contact with family, friends or neighbours over the winter months.

The Plymouth Online Directory share a list of clubs and hobbies in Plymouth. Visit this page by searching 'Clubs and Hobbies' within the Plymouth Online Directory.



Wellbeing and Family Hubs in Plymouth

Throughout Plymouth, Wellbeing Hubs offer friendly and welcoming spaces for socialising or obtaining advice on mental health, household finances or general information.

Wellbeing Hubs are situated in a number of areas near you, including the City Centre, Estover, Whitleigh, North Prospect, Mannamead and more. Find your nearest Wellbeing Hub.

Family Hubs offer a range of support services for families in Plymouth from pregnancy, through childhood, and up to age 19 (or 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities).

Family Hubs are situated in a number of areas near you, including Efford, West Park, Stonehouse, Plympton and more. Find your nearest Family Hub.

Welcoming Spaces

If you are looking for a welcoming space to spend time in this winter, many organisations in Plymouth are opening their doors.

Community organisations, charities, places of worship and libraries are providing warm, safe spaces many offering extras such as free wi-fi, refreshments and activities.

Learn new skills

Learning a new skill can be a great way to deter winter blues by keeping you focused on something that might interest you.

Learn for Free is a free training programme for PCH residents, leaseholders, shared owners and household members, looking to gain a new skill or work towards a qualification.

There are a number of ways that you can get involved with PCH, through taking part in resident groups, clubs or through Make a Difference Days, which are one off days that bring local residents, staff and other organisations together to clean up neighbourhoods and talk about local issues. Find out more on our website.

NHS Health Check

If you're between 40 and 74 and don't have pre-existing conditions you should be invited to an NHS Health Check every 5 years. The health checks can also be made at local pharmacies. Visit the NHS Health Check webpage to find out more information on eligibility.

If you think you are eligible but have not been invited, please contact your local GP.

Flu Vaccine

Vaccinating against the impact of flu can be an effective way to prevent severe illness and as the months become colder, cases of flu can become more prevalent.

Vaccination can be an effective way to prevent severe illness and even hospitalisation.

You can find out more about the flu jab on the NHS website.

One You Plymouth

Looking for ways to change your life to be healthier and happier? One You Plymouth is a free, local, friendly team within Plymouth, here to help you make those changes.

They offer support in a number of areas, including:

- Help to quit smoking, Help to lose weight, Help to get active, Falls prevention, NHS Health Checks
- They offer both face-to-face and telephone appointments, as well as virtual appointments through the Livewell Connect App.
- To book an appointment, call their Wellbeing Team directly on 01752 437 177.

PCH resident joins national Social Housing Resident Panel



Find out more

Melony Gallagher, an engaged Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) resident, is now a member of the national Social Housing Resident Panel, giving her the opportunity to share her views with the Government and Ministers as policy on social housing is developed and reforms are implemented.

The Panel brings together up to 250 social housing residents from across the country, making sure they can have their voices heard, with members contributing their ideas through focus groups, online communities and meetings.

All residents of social housing across England are given the opportunity to apply when applications are open and are not required to have any experience of taking part in resident engagement prior to their application.

Melony has worked with PCH as an engaged resident for many years and is currently a Customer Focus Committee (CFC) co-optee, as well as a member of various resident involvement groups including the Resident Communications Advisors (RCA), voids inspectors and more.

Mel was delighted to be selected for the national panel. **She said:** "I'm delighted to be involved, as I know that it will help with my own education and knowledge base

of social housing. It will also be great to have my voice heard at a national level, really benefitting my role as an engaged resident.

"There have been so many changes to regulatory frameworks and there's more to come, so being able to influence this as a resident is an exciting prospect.

"When applications open again, I really encourage other residents to apply, as it's a very important way for us to get our views across to the Government and the Regulator, and will give us a chance to make an impact at this high level."

If you'd like to help shape and improve our services and tell us what it's really like to be a PCH resident, find out how to get involved on our website.

Festive Fire Safety



Christmas poses additional fire safety risks in your home. It's important to make sure your festive decorations are safe to avoid the risk of fire.

Christmas Trees

- Christmas trees are incredibly flammable, and the smallest spark can set your tree alight.
- Select a younger, newly felled tree which has a strong green colour, as aged real trees tend to be drier and more flammable.
- Water your real tree daily, which increases fire resistance as well as keeping it healthier for longer.
- Keep your tree away from open fires.

Christmas Decorations

- Decorations can burn easily so don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Keep decorations and cards away from a fireplace.
- For more information about fire safety in your home, visit our dedicated help and advice page.

Christmas Lights

- Check that your Christmas lights are in good working order and are bought from a reputable retailer.
- Make sure that your Christmas lights carry the British Safety Standard sign.
- Use outdoor light displays responsibly.
- Extension leads generate heat so should be used carefully.
- Never make a chain of extension leads.
- Always fully extend wind-up extension leads, ensuring they can be used externally if they are being used outdoors.
- Always turn off your Christmas tree lights before going to bed or going out and take the plug out from the socket. They should not be left unattended.

Christmas Presents

If you have received an item or are gifting an item that includes a lithium battery, it's important to be vigilant as they can catch fire or explode if damaged, overcharged, or used incorrectly. E-mobility devices such as e-bikes and e-scooters commonly use lithium batteries, and below is what you need to know, what to look out for and how to report any potential hazards in our buildings:

Safe storage

Do

- Store your device inside your own flat, not in shared spaces.
- Keep the device away from flammable items, heat sources, and direct sunlight.
- Make sure smoke alarms are working in your home.

Don't

- Store or charge e-bikes or e-scooters in communal areas, corridors, stairwells, or bin stores - these are vital escape routes in an emergency.
- Block access to fire exits or lift lobbies.

It is a breach of our tenancy agreement to store or charge any e-mobility device in communal areas. This puts residents at risk, and you must report it if you see it.

Advice for charging safely at home

- Only use the manufacturer's charger – never mix or use cheap or non-genuine alternatives.
- Place the device on a hard, flat surface when charging - never on a bed, sofa or carpet.
- Don't overcharge – unplug once fully charged and never charge overnight or while you're out.
- Keep a working smoke alarm nearby.

Advice for charging safely at home

Only buy from reputable sellers, such as:

- Major UK retailers (Argos, Halfords, Currys, etc.)
- Verified stores or manufacturer websites

Avoid

- Unbranded devices or parts from online marketplaces or social media ads
- Second-hand batteries or chargers — these may be damaged or unsafe

Look for

- CE or UKCA safety marking
- A clear manufacturer name and contact info
- Return policy and warranty

You said, we did



Find out
more

Your feedback matters to us, and directly helps us as we work to improve our services for residents.

We are always looking for ways to improve what we do at PCH so we can provide homes and thriving communities where people truly want to live.

There are a number of ways we gather views and feedback from our residents, and this includes consultations, resident reviews and neighbourhood plans.

Resident Reviews involve bringing together a group of interested residents to scrutinise some of the core services we deliver. The subject for scrutiny is selected using a range of measures that indicate where a service would benefit from being reviewed, including complaints and performance information as well as a resident survey. Residents can get involved in a number of ways and can take part in person and online. Find out more about how to get involved here.

Neighbourhood Plans explain the main issues affecting your area and what we're doing to make it a better place to live, with each neighbourhood having different priorities which are based on your feedback.

View the changes we've made in the last 12 months on our website or ask your Housing Officer for a flyer.

Find out more about how to get involved to help shape and improve our services and to tell us what it's really like to be a PCH resident at www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/your-community/get-involved

Take a look at our latest consultation results below so you can see how resident engagement and feedback helped shape our work:

Vauxhall Street block colour

As part of a consultation, we asked local residents at Vauxhall Street what colour they wanted the block to be painted, with a choice of 12 colours to choose from. PCH believe that giving residents choices when it comes to the look of their property helps with ownership of where they live.

You said:

Those that responded favoured four of the 12 colours offered.

We will:

Ensure that these colours are used by the contractor when completing the works. This is scheduled to take place between September and December 2025.

Pentamar Street Communal Area Improvements

As part of a consultation, we asked local residents in the blocks including and surrounding Pentamar Street, what improvements they'd like to have to their communal areas. PCH wanted to ensure that any improvements that took place took into account the views and opinions of local people to ensure that PCH were being guided by residents on what they wanted to see more of.

You said:

88% of respondents to this survey were in favour of the identified areas being renovated

51% of respondents to this survey confirmed that they don't use the courtyards currently.

All renovation options offered were popular with residents, with the resurfacing of the floor being the most popular choice

We did:

The PCH Housing Officer will be exploring available funding streams to ensure that renovation works take place.

Any funding bid will ensure that all renovation works provide inclusive, accessible, and functional areas for everyone within the community.

PCH will prioritise residents choices within any funding application to ensure that local peoples wishes are being met.

We regularly update our You Said, We Did webpage following our consultations, and more information about this, other consultations and how to get involved to help shape and improve our services on our website.

Our Reuse Centre – supporting the local community

When we clear empty homes after a resident moves out, sometimes items are left behind, and in previous years these often ended up being thrown away.

Our Reuse Centre provides a vital resource to help reduce what ends up in landfill as well, as providing hugely beneficial items able to be restored and donated to residents in need.

Staff now take discarded items to our Reuse Centre at Burrington Way where they can be sorted, cleaned and made available to be re-used by residents or given to charity.

We recently partnered with Jabulani, a multi-cultural food court based on Union Street in Plymouth, which helps create belief in people from diverse communities to build thriving food businesses that are rooted in the community.

Jabulani's CEO Jabo visited the Reuse Centre for a tour alongside Les, a team leader from PCH's Environmental Services team, to see if any of the goods donated would be of use to their business.

During the visit, Jabo noticed some Djembe (drums) which the Reuse team had earmarked for a donation to the charity shop. After Jabo explained how he brings children together from across the city to teach them about cultural food and music, Les then offered the Djembe to Jabo for his business, which Jabo was extremely grateful for.



We're really glad that the drums have gone to a new home, in an area which is the home to many of our residents.

Sharing on social media, Jabo said: "We want to acknowledge our good partner Plymouth Community Homes for their actions of ethically dispose and reuse all the materials from their residential and commercial property once tenants leave items behind. Like our JABULANI products, sustainability and ethics comes at a cost of perseverance and good leadership. Well done to the team at the sorting warehouse and the leadership...we inherited some good Djembe that will teach belonging in our Stonehouse community."



We help people step into home ownership through affordable shared ownership homes across Devon and Cornwall, making home ownership more accessible, one step at a time.

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The introduction of Awaab's Law



Find out
more

As of 27 October 2025, all social landlords must comply with the regulations of Awaab's Law, addressing all emergency hazards and all damp and mould hazards that present a significant risk of harm to residents within fixed timescales.

Awaab's Law is named in memory of two-year old Awaab Ishak, who tragically passed away on 21 December 2020, with the inquest into his death concluding that he died as a result of prolonged exposure to mould in his Rochdale Boroughwide Housing social home. The law which was prompted by the inquest, gives residents new protections and rights, with social landlords now required to follow legally enforced timescales when it comes to cases of damp and mould.

PCH welcomes Awaab's Law, which has been introduced with a phased approach, with the first phase starting in October 2025 covering all damp and mould hazards and emergency hazards. In 2026, requirements will expand to apply to a wider range of health hazards. In 2027 the requirements will expand further to the remaining hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Despite the phased approach, we'll continue to meet our legal duties to keep all homes safe by carrying out repairs in line with our published repairing timescales, ensuring that everyone has a clean, comfortable, safe and secure affordable place to live, free of dangerous health or safety hazards.

As part of our ongoing commitment to tackle damp and mould and following our damp and mould scrutiny in 2023/2024, we have expanded our damp and mould team which now consists of a damp and disrepair manager, three damp and disrepair supervisors and a damp and mould coordinator, created a new reporting system for damp and mould cases and include broader reporting measures to track and monitor damp and mould reported performance to ensure PCH is delivering a quality service.

How to report damp and mould

If you're experiencing problems with damp, mould and condensation please call us on 0808 230 6500 for immediate action.

During the call, we will ask you a few simple questions and will work with you to investigate the problems you're experiencing.

You can also contact us by filling out an enquiry form on our website, messaging us on social media or sending us a message through your MyPCH account, however calling our Contact Centre team will help us to support you at the earliest opportunity.

We will investigate all reports of damp and mould within 10 working days. Following the investigation, residents will receive a written summary of our findings and actions which will be taken within three days of completing the investigation.

The investigation may consist of a physical inspection of the property, or by asking a series of questions about the resident and household members and the extent of the damp and mould.

If the damp and mould is found to be dangerous (an emergency) upon inspection by the Damp and Mould team, we will complete the investigation and make it safe within 24 hours. If we are unable to make it safe, we will find alternative accommodation for the residents and household members, regularly keeping them informed of the next steps and progress of the works within the home.

Damp and mould inspections will be prioritised by the Investigating Supervisor in accordance with the regulations of Awaab's Law and the risk that is posed to the residents and household members.

The hazard categories are determined by the Investigating Supervisor. Detail of the below fixed timeframes for all cases of damp and mould can be found on our Repairs Webpage, by scanning the QR code above or by contacting our damp and mould team.

- Category 1 Hazard (emergency) - 24 hours
- Category 2 Hazard - 5 working days
- Category 2 Hazard - 20 working days
- Category 2 Hazard - 60 working days (12 weeks)

To allow us to triage all cases of damp and mould in line with our 10-day response time, we would appreciate your cooperation with allowing access into your property for any relevant inspections and repairs and following guidance to help with any issues that are being experienced.

Our damp and mould team are available to discuss any ongoing problems or queries you may have. If you would like to speak with the team directly, please let our Contact Centre team know by calling us on 0808 230 6500.

Investing in Your Home – December Update

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

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

Read more about key areas of our Major Works Investment Programme below:

Major Works

Pembroke Street

Following a careful design and resident consultation programme, a major works programme at Pembroke Street is now underway, with the works set to take in the region of three years to complete.

Work includes full scaffolds put up on each block to enable new roofs to be installed and external decorating to take place; new windows will be fitted to PCH flats, and the balconies will be replaced and modernised.

The contractor, BuildX, will be undertaking external decoration, reroofing, installing new metal guttering, internal decorating of communal spaces along with general repairs to the homes.

1-15 How St, 1-15 Looe St and 115 to 131 Vauxhall St

A major works scheme at How, Looe and Vauxhall Street is due to commence on site in January 2026.

Meticulous design work was completed to ensure the Grade 2 Listed status of the flats was not compromised and the refurbishments are being carried out in keeping with the history of the neighbourhood.

Cecil Street, King Street & Neswick House

A refurbishment project is now underway with contractor Bell Group to carry out external redecoration, install new windows to the flats, upgrade the balconies and carry out general repairs to these homes.

Our Design Team has worked on the proposed colour schemes for the external walls of the buildings to give homes a fresh, vibrant and cohesive appearance.

These options will be presented through a consultation process with residents, providing an opportunity to select the preferred options.

A representative from the project team will be visiting in due course to share the proposed options with residents in person.

Read the full update
on InTouch online

bit.ly/MajorWorks2025



Stock Condition Survey Update

We're making great progress with our Stock Condition Survey programme and **over 90% of homes** have now been surveyed.

A big thank you to everyone who has already taken the time to take part.

The survey information helps us understand the condition of PCH properties so we can best plan how we invest in your homes over the next five years,

making sure they are ready for the future. Our goal is to reach 100% of homes surveyed by the end of March 2026.

If you haven't had your survey yet, please call us on **01752 388 397** or email us at Asset.management@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk to book in an appointment at a suitable time for you, including evenings.

Heating and Electrical Contract Update

Heating Programme

We recently held an online survey led by our Resident Involvement Team, to gather feedback from our residents about the current gas heating systems in your homes, where we received nearly 500 responses.

The feedback received has helped to shape a new five-year heating upgrade programme, and we're now ready to appoint two contractors to begin the upgrades. We are starting with homes that have the oldest boilers, and residents will be contacted direct if your home is included in the programme.

Electrical Rewire Programme

We've identified a need to improve the electrical cabling in some homes, with many homes already receiving a partial upgrade during previous kitchen and bathroom works. This programme will complete the rest of the home.

We will aim to carry out this work in homes that are currently empty (void) where possible, for minimal disruption. If we identify that your home requires a rewire, we'll do our best to complete the work with minimal disruption while you remain in your home.

Door Entry & Communal Lighting Upgrades

When we upgrade blocks, we look to include improvements to door entry systems and communal lighting.

Door Entry Systems

We're working with our in-house electrical team to upgrade door entry controls in communal blocks. These upgrades will improve security and give residents better control to who can access the building, this will also now be monitored on a cloud base system.

Communal Lighting

We're also improving communal lighting to make shared areas brighter and safer. This includes installing emergency lighting that meets current safety standards. The upgrades will be SMART LED lighting to improve efficiency.

Planned Upgrades

This financial year, we'll also be upgrading:

- Door access control at Cecil Street, King Street, and Pembroke Street
- Lighting & Emergency lighting at Pembroke Street

We're doing our best to keep our communities clean and free from litter, but we can't do it alone.

Our caretaking teams frequently litter pick communal areas and report fly tipping, but we need your help to make sure our neighbourhoods are clear from litter by putting rubbish in nearby bins.

Find out more about what our Environmental Services team does to help maintain our communities, and how to report fly tipping if you see it.

Find out more

bit.ly/PCHEnvironmental





Read more on
InTouch online

Southway Community Group CIC

Southway Community Group CIC was created with the 13,500 strong community of people living in Southway and the surrounding areas in mind, and an aim to create a community hub that enables people to:

- Come together as a community
- Enjoy activities – they run coach trips, special events, groups for all ages and abilities including Tea and Tots, Kurling, a lunch club, wellbeing walks and so much more
- Develop friendships
- Undertake hobbies and interests
- Promote healthy community relationships
- Increase cohesion and inclusion

Southway Community Group CIC was first set up in 2013 and is now managed by Jenny Oliver and Karen Stewart, who work as the Southway Community Group and Wellbeing Hub Manager and Wellbeing Hub Advisor. They are based at the Southway Community Hub which is located at the Hendwell Centre.

In October this year, they won the 'Best Community Project' award at the Plymouth Community Awards in association with YMCA Plymouth and Discovery College, recognising the dedication and hard work of the group to improve the Southway Community.

The award was sponsored by Plymouth Community Homes (PCH), and to mark their win, we're shining a light on the incredible work that they do in Southway and beyond and to promote the services they offer to help other residents living in the local area.

We met with Jenny and Karen to find out more about how it all started, and how much having a community

group in Southway means to them and the local community.

Karen said: "Before we set up the group, my girls were reaching their teenage years and I didn't want them hanging around on street corners in Southway, so I wanted to see what I could do.

"I was living in and working in Southway within the schools and children centre at the time, and Jenny was working at Beechwood Primary School as the Family Support Advisor so had a good knowledge of the local area and its community.

"I asked Jenny to team up with me to find a community space in Southway to start a group - and the rest is history."

Jenny said: "Southway Community Group started with the Tea and Tots group which came from the local nursery closing. We decided to set up the parent and toddler session within the local church, on a Friday which was our day off. The opportunity to set up a second session within the church then came about. Roger, who is one of our long-term volunteers, still runs this today.

"We then outgrew the church, so we spoke to Rishi, now one of the managers at the Youth Service who was based at the Southway Youth Centre, and he allowed us to come and use the space during the day. We brought along our two groups at the time and then parents at the Tea and Tots group and members of the Kurling group asked whether food could be provided for them, which is then where the Coffee and Cake Club came from on a Friday and the inception of the 'Sway Café'."

Karen added: "During the Covid-19 pandemic, a very nice resident left us a legacy in his will, which was enough for one of us to be able to commit more time to the group. We decided that Jen would take

"I get excited when a new person walks through the door, as we just know that they're going to flourish and thrive"



this opportunity, and within two weeks I got the job of Community Builder, and this gave us the opportunity to progress and provide more sessions within the Hub.

“Southway Community Group CIC has grown and taken on the agreement for the Wellbeing Hub, allowing the whole community and beyond to benefit, as we really do support from bump to grave.

“We have a lot of volunteers who support the community with their skills, if we didn’t have our amazing volunteers, we would not be able to provide all the services and activities we do. We often hear from them that Southway Community Group and the Hub is their safe space, and that they don’t know what they’d be doing if we weren’t here. Community Members have also told us they are also starting to build their own support networks since attending groups and sessions, which is really wonderful to see.

“One of our mottos within the centre is ‘enter as guests and leave as friends’. We’ve had so many people who have visited us, built friendships and resilience, enabling them to go to other groups, and return to work or volunteering.

“I have always said, this isn’t a job. I don’t have a job, I go every day to a place that I love to go to, with people that I love to be with. This is my safe space and my extended family, and I just love being here and doing what we do.”

Jenny added: “Although we were so delighted to win the Best Community Project award, we don’t do what we do for recognition. However it was amazing to be nominated and win as it means so much to our community and hopefully, we may be able to secure more funding as we rely on fundraising to enable us to continue.”

Karen said: “We’re absolutely proud of every single thing we have achieved, and every person involved, and I get excited when a new person walks through the door, as we just know that they’re going to flourish and thrive

and to see their journey is incredible and this feels like an award for us.

“The hub has been buzzing after the award ceremony. We have had lots of congratulations from the community and other agencies. Nevertheless we remind them that it is as much their award as ours.”

Jenny, Karen and all the volunteers would love to welcome you to Southway Community Group.

Find out more about what’s on at their website and Facebook page



Read about the Plymouth Community Awards on InTouch online

bit.ly/PlymCommunityAwards25



Communities & Partnerships Update

Welcome to our first Communities and Partnership update.

We are pleased to share that Rachael Fox has taken on the role of Communities and Partnerships Manager at Plymouth Community Homes. Rachael previously led the Health and Housing Project as Partnership Project Manager, working in partnership with Livewell Southwest to support the health and wellbeing of our communities.

In this new role, Rachael is continuing to lead the Health and Housing Project whilst also managing our Communities team, which includes our Communities Workers and Resident Learning Coordinators.

This new role reflects our commitment to strengthening partnerships and empowering communities.

Rachael Fox, Communities and Partnerships Manager, said: “I’m really pleased to continue the work we’ve started with our partners. By bringing together health, housing, and community support, we have a great chance to make a real difference in people’s lives. Our teams care deeply about helping residents and creating new opportunities, and I’m proud to lead this work as we grow our investment in communities.”

Health & Housing Project Update – December 2025

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) and Livewell Southwest continue to work in partnership to help improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents. The project aims to help people live independently, safely, and healthily at home for longer.

To speak to the Health and Housing Project team or to find out more about the support that is provided please email healthandhousing@pch.co.uk.

Find out more about our exciting projects, including our Plymouth Living Lab and our involvement in Plymouth’s Cold and Damp Homes Taskforce below.

Plymouth Living Lab

Hear from **Kieran Green, Community Engagement Researcher at Plymouth Community Homes**, who shares more about this project:

Over the past four months, PCH residents have been trialling Community Connections, a digital platform developed by Cisco, designed to bring people together through online activities.

We have run a variety of sessions, from cooking groups to chair yoga, frailty exercise classes, photography classes and art therapy sessions. We have also offered one-off special events, such as a Murder Mystery session and even a virtual tour of Venice.

This trial will be coming to an end in late December, but there’s still time to join in – whether that be for weekly art sessions (with free art packs), Snack & Chat groups, or exercise classes. To get involved, email kieran.green@pch.co.uk.

Residents have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and we will be rounding up the project by taking our users on a festive trip to Saltram House, beautifully decorated for Christmas.

By bringing together our residents’ fantastic ideas and the knowledge developed by the Living Lab team, the project has been brilliant.

Early findings suggest improvements in health and wellbeing and digital confidence. Our users have shared how the system has helped open up the world of digital, improve health, and provide social connection.

- “It’s sort of forced me to take a step nearer to the digital way of life... I’ve learned how to edit pictures on the phone. I haven’t quite got to grips with the laptop yet, but I will”
- “I’ve met people I wouldn’t have met otherwise...”
- “My GP said the chair exercises [in Community Connections] would complement the other exercises I’m doing.”
- “It gave me something to look forward to, even if I had anxiety. I knew that day I had a class.”

Although the trial of Community Connections is coming to an end, the Living Lab story is far from over.

We’ve just installed a new set of sensors in a number of our homes. These are designed to help predict changes in health, flagging any changes in routine through to a digital dashboard.

People taking part will receive weekly phone calls and help us to link certain sensor-detected changes to service needs. Such as social prescribing, housing maintenance, social care, or GP referrals.

The hope is that this study will contribute to the NHS's mission to prevent hospital admissions among older people, through quick and proactive support as possible health problems arise.

To find out more about the Plymouth Living Lab and how you can get involved, please contact, Kieran Green, Community Engagement Researcher on 07562434663 or email; kieran.green@pch.co.uk.

Cold and Damp Homes Taskforce

Formed in November 2023 under the Thrive Plymouth initiative, the taskforce brings together partners from public health, housing, energy, local government, and community sectors.

Plymouth Community Homes has played a leading role in setting up this taskforce and together with partners, we're leading action to reduce the health risks involved in living in cold and damp homes by tackling these conditions.

Our Mission

To support partnership working across Plymouth so that leadership, strategy, and resources help protect residents from the health impacts of poor housing conditions.

Our Goal

To create accessible support for anyone living in cold, damp homes, ensuring their health and wellbeing is supported and issues are addressed quickly.

The taskforce has secured funding and on 21 November 2025 hosted an event for frontline workers, landlords and other professionals to learn about tenancy rights, hear from speakers on legal updates and raise awareness of housing support services.

The hope is the taskforce can continue to help frontline workers know how best to support people, and we are looking forward to continuing to support this important work.

Communities Update

Unlock Your Potential with our Free Training Programme!

Are you looking to enhance your skills and boost your confidence? Our free training programme is here to help you achieve your goals!

Learn for Free offers a variety of courses tailored to meet your needs whether you're looking to improve your employment skills, gain essential life skills, or get involved in your community. This includes working with other learning providers across the city to help you find the right course or options for you.

Here are some of the courses we offer:

- **Employment Skills:** Take part in courses such as first aid and health and safety to build your CV and develop workplace skills that employers value.
- **Life Skills:** Build your confidence and motivation, manage your finances, and discover the joys of cooking healthy and tasty meals.
- **Involvement Skills:** Get certified in committee skills, learn food safety practices to support group activities, and improve your communication skills.

We are currently reviewing our training offer and want to make sure we are providing the opportunities that matter most to residents. We look forward to sharing more about this in the New Year.

If you are interested, or want to speak to us about your learning or training goals, please contact Ashleigh Knowles, our Resident Learning Coordinator at learnforfree@pch.co.uk or by calling **0808 230 6500**.

Find out more

bit.ly/PCH_LearnForFree



New murals brighten the Stonehouse community

We're delighted to reveal a number of new murals in Stonehouse to breathe new life into a tired and grey suburban areas previously popular for tagging and vandalism.

The artwork, including a funky street scene, the ocean, a fisherman, a woodland creature and more, was commissioned to inspire pride, reduce anti-social behaviour and strengthen community cohesion.

For PCH, reducing the frequency of graffiti removal and repairs means our housing and repairs teams can concentrate on delivering our essential services to residents.

Leigh Ferguson, Senior Communities Worker at PCH, and Nicola Stockman, Housing Officer, were successful in bidding for a Money Tree Fund grant to fund the new murals and brighten the area. They commissioned Jordan Lauder (Aka SpraySaint) and Roy Christie to work their magic.

Leigh Ferguson, Senior Communities Worker at Plymouth Community Homes, said: "We're really pleased with how the murals have turned out. Thank you to Roy and Jordan for helping us to make this happen and to the local community who have engaged with the project. We think the artwork really brightens up the area but also hope that it will help to reduce the amount of illegal graffiti we see popping up too."

"I'd like to give a special mention to local ranger Adrian who supported the mural artists while they were in the area and made a positive impact on the overall project. He went above and beyond to ensure that Roy in particular was supported during his time working on the murals, and truly lived the PCH values. Thank you Adrian."

Nicola Stockman, Housing Officer at Plymouth Community Homes, added: "The Union Street mural has really brightened up the area and brought a sense of pride to the community. It's been wonderful to see Roy and Jordan made so welcome by residents and to watch everyone come together around such a positive project. Stonehouse has such a strong and vibrant community, and I'm proud to have been part of something that reflects that before moving on to my new patch. This is a great example of how the Money Tree Fund can make a visible difference, and I'd encourage residents to get in touch if they have ideas to benefit their local area."

Adrian, Ranger at Plymouth Community Homes, said: "I really enjoyed meeting Roy and supporting him where required, not just through my job as a Ranger for the area but also as a friend. He put in a lot of hard work during the two and a half months that he spent working on the murals, and he truly painted with the heart and soul. The murals have brightened up the area, and I regularly notice children enjoying the new artwork."

Roy Christie said: "Working on this mural project has been incredible. I have been painting all my life and every work that I do is part of my journey, and on this journey I have made friends and got to know very good people, all while doing what I love."

"The people in Stonehouse were so lovely, bringing me cakes and cups of coffee, and I keep bumping into different people I have met in and around Plymouth which is great."

"I thoroughly enjoy what I do, and I really enjoyed working on this project with PCH in Stonehouse, which was created alongside the local community."



See more photos of the mural
on InTouch online

bit.ly/StonehouseMural



Bringing Grassroots Boxing to Hillcrest - Carl's Boxing Stable



Find out more

Located in the heart of Plympton, Carl's Boxing Stable brings grassroots boxing back to the community, providing boxing training, fitness sessions, and a support network for local residents.

Run by Carl Goldsborough and his wife Sarah, alongside his team Gavin Bolger, Jamie Landricombe, Vernan Pemprase, JP Eccles and Darren Lawton. The team operate from The Hillcrest Community Centre, a building leased to Carl by Plymouth Community Homes (PCH), which not only offers fitness and boxing sessions for all skill levels, but serves as a community hub, hosting community led events and support sessions.

Gym sessions are very affordable, priced at £3 for children and £4 for adults, with some sessions funded through initiatives such as Plymouth City Council, PCH and government schemes.

Carl has plans to develop a five-week program for individuals or groups that includes fitness training and boxing, with the option to continue their training if suitable. Much of the work involved is focused on serving the local community and promoting positive mental health and fitness.

Carl Goldsborough said: "Everything we do here is for the community. We are trying to bring grassroots boxing back to the area and provide a place for positive mental health all whilst improving fitness and health of our members"

Carl started boxing when he was only 11 and has now been coaching for the past 30 years. He competed as an amateur and hoped to turn professional but unfortunately suffered a detached retina. Originally

based in Torquay Apollo Boxing Gym, he trained with Gareth Hog and the Torbay team from Seven Hills Boxing Gym. Carl then moved to Plympton 25 years ago and set up Carl's Boxing Stable in Hillcrest, Plympton.

Members at Carl's Boxing Stable range from all levels of experience and goals, with Carl often taking both amateurs and professionals from his gym abroad to compete, including several international champions.

During our visit, we met Corrina Turner from Seven Hills Gym, who aims to turn professional in the future. This is a great example of how Carl operates and networks throughout Devon and Cornwall. He is always seeking sponsors and collaborations to support children and local community members.

Hazel Alexander, a Communities Worker from Plymouth Community Homes, is sometimes based at the centre, where she works closely with residents who visit the centre and helps identify the support and events needed in the area.

Hazel Alexander, Communities Worker from Plymouth Community Homes, highlighted the importance of the gym: "Carl's Boxing Stable is an absolute gem for the area, promoting positive mental health and fitness classes for residents. Carl's hard work and support for his local community shines through with the amazing work he does day in and day out."

Devonport Futures Digital Essentials Programme

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) has been working in partnership with Real Ideas on the Devonport Futures Digital Essentials Programme since September 2024, offering PCH residents a free opportunity to boost their digital skills and confidence.

The programme is open to anyone 18 and over living in Plymouth, and we have been encouraging our residents to take part and make the most of this opportunity.

The courses are designed to help people increase their digital skills for whatever matters most to them. Whether that is finding a job, career changes, volunteering, studying, or simply feeling more confident using everyday technology.

Thanks to funding from the Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, residents have been able to:

- Learn how to use AI tools to create content and improve CVs and job applications
- Use tools like Google Docs to create, edit and share documents
- Try out 360° filming and experience their work in the immersive dome at Market Hall in Devonport

So far, 137 people across Plymouth have completed the Digital Essentials Programme, including 26 PCH residents who have gone on to gain further qualifications or complete a course in their chosen area.

Domestic Abuse Champions Update

This October, we supported Domestic Abuse Awareness Month, an international campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse and unite us all in our determination to tackle it.

PCH also supports the yearly campaign of 16 Days of Action Against Domestic Abuse to raise awareness about domestic abuse across the South West, with a focus that it affects all genders, ages, ethnicities and sexualities.

Over the last few months, we have recruited new Domestic Abuse Champions from across the organisation who are on hand to support colleagues and residents as needed around domestic abuse matters.

The new Champions form a Domestic Abuse Champions Network across the business, working with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Steering Group to ensure necessary support, guidance and signposting is available when required.

The recruitment will continue to strengthen our organisational approach and the ongoing work towards our DAHA accreditation to ensure PCH demonstrates best practice in the support and understanding of domestic abuse for both residents and staff.

Our local housing teams are always on hand to help residents who are experiencing domestic abuse, and information about the support we provide can be found on our website. If residents are experiencing domestic abuse, they can also fill out the form on our website or can call 0808 230 6500.



Natasha Kirkham, Quality Assurance Manager at Plymouth Community Homes, said: “We’re really pleased that we have been able to expand the support available for residents and staff dealing with Domestic Abuse. The specific training for DA Champions ensures they’re equipped with the knowledge and understanding of such an important issue and are able to provide the necessary guidance to individuals when needed. PCH’s commitment to tackling domestic abuse remains a focus as we work with DAHA and other partners to develop best practice.”

Changes to your local housing teams

We have made a number of changes to how our housing teams operate in local communities to help improve the services we provide to residents.

We have moved some Housing Officers to cover different areas, so we can make sure we respond quickly and effectively to any resident enquiries.

You can find out who your Housing Officer, Assistant Housing Officer and Incomes Officer or Leasehold Officer are on our website using our ‘Find my Housing Team’ function, by entering your postcode and selecting your address.

You may find that your local housing team has remained the same, or there may be a few changes to who looks after your neighbourhood, but should you need to contact us about your tenancy, home or neighbourhood, your Housing team is here to help.

There are many ways that you can get in touch with us to raise a repair, if you have any queries about your rent and more. They include: through your MyPCH account, where the information for your local housing team has already been updated, by calling us on 0808 230 6500 to speak to our friendly Contact Centre team, online via our enquiry form, via email at enquiries@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk or on Facebook, X or Instagram. You can also visit us at our Head Office – Plumer House, Tailyour Road, Plymouth, PL6 5DH.

You can also meet your local housing team at our dedicated drop-in sessions which are located across the city, and during our community walkabouts, where you can also tell us what you think of your area and what we can improve.

Find your Housing Team

bit.ly/FindMyHousingTeam





Funding secured for 80 new social homes at Plymouth city centre development site

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) and Plymouth City Council have secured vital grant funding from Homes England to enable works to start on creating 80 new homes for social rent in Plymouth city centre.

PCH and Plymouth City Council will work in partnership to deliver a new, eco-friendly neighbourhood on land off Bath Street in the Millbay regeneration area, which will eventually provide up to 135 affordable homes overall for social rent, as well as shared ownership purchase, to meet local housing need.

The £33.5m scheme will create a brand-new community on the temporary car park bordering Martin Street, with energy-efficient new homes made available for those on the waiting list for a social home.

The scheme was awarded full planning permission at the end of 2023, and PCH and PCC have now jointly secured the necessary grant funding from Homes England, and funding contributions from Plymouth City Council totalling in excess of £5m from the Plan for Homes. Funding from PCH of £14.2m through loans and subsidies has also been agreed.

The first phase of an expected three phases will begin in February-March 2026 with appointed contractors Classic Builders on site, and deliver 80 homes for social rent and one unit for commercial rent. Social homes will include a mix of 1 and 2 bed flats and 3 bed houses and will be available to households on the Devon Home Choice waiting list.

Andrew Lawrie, Head of Development at Plymouth Community Homes, said: "Substantial grant funding was essential to enable this major affordable housing scheme to happen at Bath Street and this is a tremendous outcome, enabling us to deliver a large number of much-needed new homes for those on the waiting list for a social rent home."

Councillor Chris Penberthy, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities and Cooperative

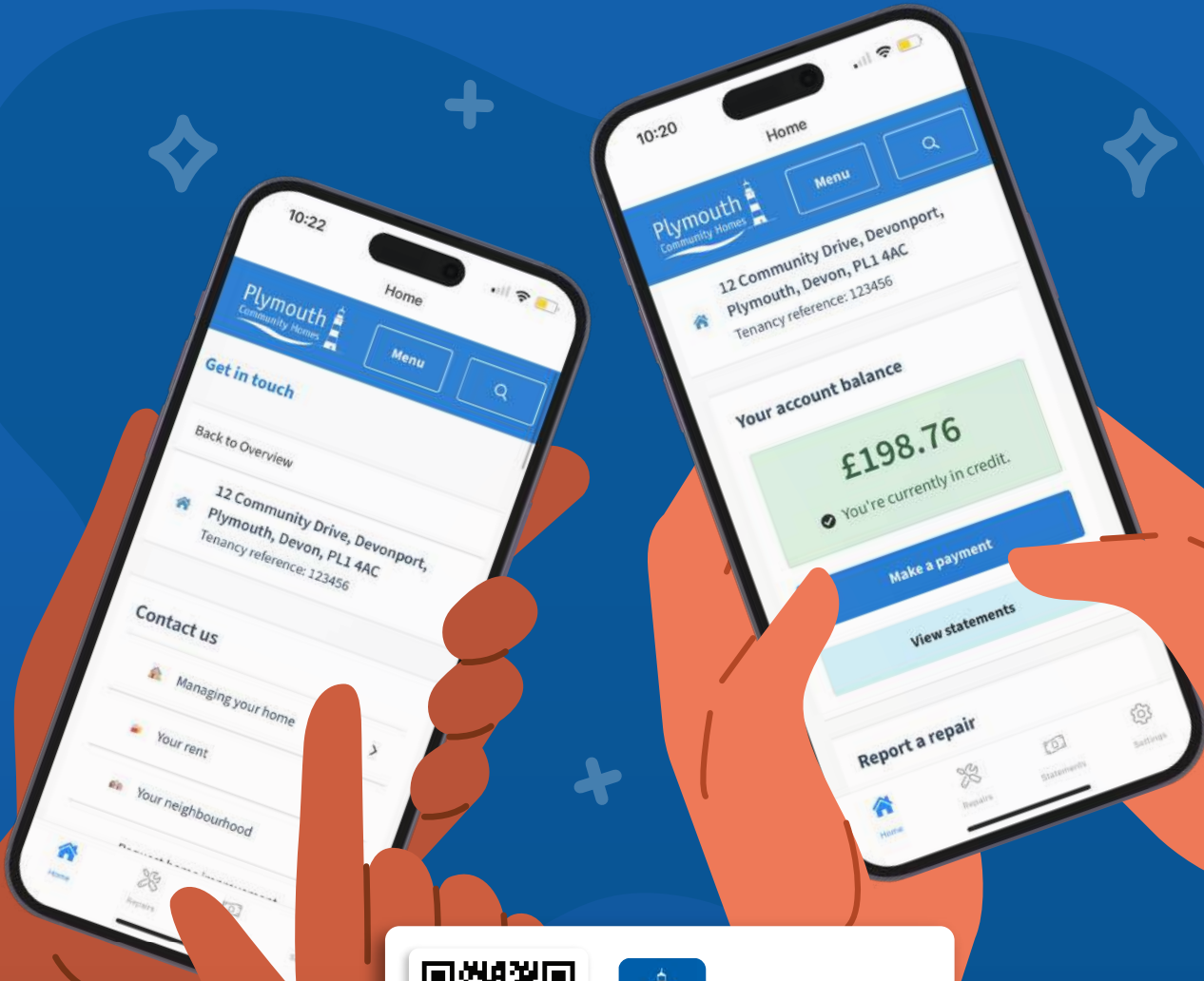
Development, said: "This, for me, is what the Plan for Homes is all about - bringing partners together and accessing funding to unlock sites like this that the market would not ordinarily consider viable."

"This is a tremendous outcome, enabling us to deliver a large number of much-needed new homes for those on the waiting list for a social rent home."

Shahi Islam, Director of Affordable Housing Grants at Homes England, said: "As the Government's housing and regeneration agency, increasing the supply of quality affordable homes remains one of our key objectives and we are committed to supporting Plymouth Community Homes to achieve their ambitions."

Completion of the first 80 homes in the scheme is estimated to take place by early 2029. Before construction works can start, some ground investigation works are taking place.

Sign up to MyPCH



MyPCH



Visit mypch.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk
or download the new MyPCH app.

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

Email news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

Plymouth Community Homes

Plumer House, Tailyour Road, Crownhill, Plymouth, PL6 5DH



www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk



0808 230 6500

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