

InTouch

Issue 48 Autumn 2021

USE
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BEFORE COMING
INTO THE SHOP
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OPEN

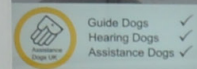
6 FEET
MAIN
PHYSICAL

ALWAYS WEAR
IN THIS FAC

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Residents' writing class is pen-stoppable - page 16



Guide Dogs ✓
Hearing Dogs ✓
Assistance Dogs ✓

WELCOME

At last, the lockdowns that have defined day to day life for so long, appear to be at an end.

While we should all remain cautious and take steps to avoid spreading coronavirus, it's reassuring to see that the worst is hopefully behind us.

The last 18 months have given us all time to reflect upon our priorities in life. Being housebound during lockdown gave us a chance to pick up new hobbies and interests.

This was certainly true for some of our residents, who after taking up creative writing classes, found themselves penning short stories and poems during those housebound days on page 16.

Sadly, since our last edition, our city has seen tragedy. The response to the heart-breaking events that unfolded in Keyham in August, saw a community shocked to its core - but united in standing together in the aftermath.

It matters to us at PCH that our residents know there are places to turn if you need help with your mental health, or just a chat to talk things through. We have several options on page 10 of places you can turn to and people who are more than willing to help.

On page 14 we have the first edition of our Plymspirational feature.

We spend a day in the life with our Rangers teams on page 12.

On page 17, you can read all about our latest nomination for a national award. We are extremely proud to have been named as finalists for the TPAS association, beating hundreds of other housing associations in the process.

Since our last nature-themed edition of In Touch, PCH have been hard at work by welcoming wildlife back to the grounds of Plumer House. We've even had some four-legged trespassers caught on CCTV, read more on page 8.

We also meet one of our high street retailers who has been blown away by the support of her customers since lockdown lifted.



Nick

Nick Lewis, Chair of the Board





Back to reality

The high street is back again, and Plymouth's traders mean business.

Retailers across the city are now welcoming shoppers back. In what has been a gruelling 18 months for many businesses, relief is in the air as we all begin to return to normal.

This is certainly the case for Leah Hara, of PlymHair & Extensions. Since the lockdown came to an end, the support she has received from the people of Plymouth has been incredible.

"It's been amazing" said Leah, who was in between serving customers. "We've had lots of people coming to the shop, which is really good. I'm so grateful for the support I've had from the people of Plymouth – it's just incredible."

PlymHair & Extensions specialise in European and Afro hair care products and services, including clip-ins, weaves, wigs and braiding. Her city centre shop has been serving happy customers in Market Avenue for almost four years.

Leah had been concerned that the high street would struggle to welcome customers back, some customers, she feared, could have been scared away from shopping in person and would choose to go online instead. This however, has not been the case.

Leah explained: "My biggest worry after the lockdown was that people would just go online to shop. With the hair products we sell, it's the sort of thing that people want to try in-person, when you buy online, you are buying blind."

When it comes to making sure her customers are safe, Leah doesn't mess around. A hand sanitiser attached to the front door - with a clear sign at eye level - cannot be missed and customers are always encouraged to mask-up when browsing inside.

Sadly, many of Leah's customers are often having chemotherapy treatment for cancer, making them clinically vulnerable to viruses. This is why it is so important that her customers know that every possible step is being taken to ensure their safety.

She explained: "Many of my customers are going through chemotherapy. I've been in the business a long while, it's so important to have the answers to the kind of questions that people going through chemo often ask."

"We still encourage customers to wear masks and we have hand sanitiser on the door. We have a lot of elderly and vulnerable customers, so I don't think we'll be taking the sanitiser away now that the lockdown has ended.

"What we encourage our customers to think about is that, when it comes to coronavirus, it's not about them, but about everyone else who it could be serious for."

PlymHair & Extensions can be found at 21 Market Avenue and is open Monday to Saturday.

"IT'S WHAT ANYONE WOULD HAVE DONE"

BROCK
HOUSE



Starts at Home Day celebrates the positive impact of housing associations up and down the country. And what better day is there to catch up with some of our very own lockdown legends.

The pandemic challenged us all to look out for one another. Keeping an eye on vulnerable neighbours and running errands for those who were shielding, saw many in our community roll their sleeves up and pitch in.

On this Starts at Home Day, we look back at the lockdown legends who were recognised by THEIR communities for going the extra mile during the pandemic.

Janet Blank from Devonport was nominated by several of her neighbours for her tireless efforts. She helped with getting meals into bellies, shopping runs and now that everyone can get together again... the occasional communal bingo night at Helen Fox House.

"I'll help anyone that needs it", explained Janet. "I'll keep helping out too, we should all love thy neighbour and the lockdown saw people in need like never before."

Brock House on the Barbican would have had a few more bored residents if it weren't for good Samaritan, Erik. He kept the Men's Shed group going on Facebook throughout the coronavirus restrictions. Adding a bit of normality for those stuck indoors. "Anyone would have done it", insisted Eric.

Last but not least, is Jeff Winnard, who was recognised by his neighbours as the go-to guy at Innes House in the city centre. His neighbours turned to Jeff for all manner of errands. He was recognised by PCH after his fellow residents sung his praises...even if he was "furious" about having his photo taken.



CRYSTAL CLEAR STEPS TO KEEP YOUR WATER BACTERIA FREE

Every year between 500 and 700 cases of Legionnaires' disease are contracted in the UK. Some of these cases can stem from tap water. The bug – otherwise known as legionella – is a type of pneumonia that can infect your lungs and, in some cases, become very serious.

Luckily, PCH has dedicated staff to ensure your water is safe. But there are a few simple steps you can take at home to give you some added protection from water-borne bugs.

“There’s lots of easy things you can do to make it harder for Legionella to spread”, said PCH Water Hygiene Manager, Christopher Gove. “It’s a naturally occurring bacteria that can be found in water, but this doesn’t mean we can’t do our bit and take a few simple steps to make it harder for the bug to develop and spread in the water supply.”

“Every year in the UK there are hundreds of reported cases of Legionnaires' disease. This can be very serious for elderly and vulnerable people so it’s worth keeping in mind.”

Christopher recommends four easy steps that can help prevent the bug from growing:

- 1. Keeping hot water hot and making sure water heaters are turned on and set to 60°C.**
- 2. Cleaning and disinfecting shower heads and hoses at least quarterly.**
- 3. Allowing our plumbers easy access to clean safety valves and complete plumbing improvements while working.**
- 4. Keep the water moving by flushing all taps at least weekly.**

He added: “We always work hard to ensure that water in communal areas is safe and clean to use and drink. But with these few extra steps at the residents’ end, we can be extra sure that tap water is as clean as can be.”

Water Hygiene Compliance Supervisor, James Noble, explained the process PCH goes through to manage the bug: “In buildings like The Beacon and our sheltered housing sites, we send water samples to be analysed every month. Samples from a central water tank which feeds the properties are sent to a laboratory and analysed. The lab hangs on to the samples for several days to check if the legionella bug is detected or growing.

“In other residential properties we change service safety valves annually to stop material from building up. The work is extensive.

James added: “Dirt is food for legionella. So, if we prevent a build-up, we cut off the food supply for the bug by limiting its growth, which helps to keep water safe.”

For further information please email: legionella@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk or call our customer services team on **0800 694 3101**



The majority of our services are now back to normal, here is a summary.

Service as normal

Services with some changes

Services paused



All repairs, safety checks and maintenance works



Flytipping removal and clearances



Outdoor environmental services



Stairwell cleaning



Laundries remain open



Outdoor playgrounds remain open



Resident led events in PCH Buildings



The Beacon is open to the public



Community rooms are open



Any routine in person home visits can take place



Community activities with face coverings and reduced social contact



Housing, Leasehold and Income Officer visits



Beacon café is fully open



Plumer House is open



Our City Centre shop is open for appointments only



Allocations, lettings, mutual exchanges and sales continue



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

For the most up to date information, please go to our website: www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk or see our Facebook and Twitter pages.



“I beg your garden?”

Plumer House joins the green revolution

It's amazing how in just a few simple steps, wildlife can come flooding back into an urban area.

At Plumer House, the PCH Environmental Services team have been hard at work, making the grounds more attractive to wildlife.

Now, they have seen all manner of critters reclaiming the space. For several years, the grass has been left to grow at Plumer. While some areas are still mowed to ensure it looks tidy, other parts are left wild to encourage birds and insects to move in.

Wildflower seeds mean that the summer is awash with colour, a tempting buffet for nectar-hunting bees.

The rich variety of insects means Plumer is becoming a popular spot for birds. Which is why our Environmental Services team are planning more bird boxes on site, for native species and twitchers alike.

In recent years, hedgehogs have seen a sharp decline in the UK. Harsh chemicals used in farming and destruction of their habitat are thought to be the main issues the prickly customers face.

Another problem for hedgehogs is closer to home: gardens have become harder to travel between. More fences, less grass, and more decking, mean hedgehogs can't travel in search of food like they once used to. Which is why “hedgehog holes” - little passageways cut into fencing - have been installed to allow them to come and go as they please.

These simple steps to welcome nature back are already producing impressive results. A number of sneaky suspects have already been seen wandering the grounds at night on the CCTV cameras, including deer, badgers and foxes.

Tara Brain, Facilities & Workplace Manager, said: “We are very proud of the work that the Environmental Services team have put into the grounds at Plumer, it makes such a difference for visitors and staff to see the wildflowers, insects and animals it attracts.”



A WHITTLE GIFT

TO SAY THANK YOU

PCH's Men's Shed has made a very special gift to say thank you after being donated tools to get them started.

The generous donor was thrilled to receive a set of hand-turned wooden pens earlier this week. Through a partnership between Plymouth Community Homes and Travis Perkins, the Men's Shed project held at Leigham Community Centre was given over £2000 worth of power tools to get them going.

Men's Sheds are a great place to pursue crafts, leisure, and practical activities. They combat social isolation by bringing people together, while sharing skills and knowledge in a friendly environment.

Hayley Boaden Dixon of Travis Perkins was delighted when she was presented with three bespoke pens as a thank you gesture. She said: "What we didn't expect was that the chaps were so touched by our donation that they made me and the two guys from the Plymouth branch handmade wood-turned pens... which are gorgeous."

Hayley explained that the social value aspect of how Travis Perkins works with was "becoming a bigger and bigger part of how they operated." After presenting Hayley with her gift, the chaps at the workshop spoke of how much their craft group meant to them.

"It was emotional to hear about their struggles", said Hayley. "Especially during covid but it made us so happy we've helped in some way." She added: "We've got some future plans that we can help them with including some work with the local railway and help with a new building when they relocate."

STRUGGLING OVER RECENT EVENTS?

You are not alone

The tragic events in Keyham last month shocked our city to the core. Few of us could have imagined such an awful day for Plymouth.

Understandably, this has been an upsetting time for our city and especially so, for the community of Keyham.

Which is why it's never been more important to know that if you want to talk, there are plenty of people wanting to listen. You are part of a community that looks out for one another.

So, if you feel personally affected by recent events, or if you just want to talk something over, you have lots of options:

Victim Support

Anyone seeking help can contact the free 24/7 Supportline number on **0808 1689 111** or get in touch online at www.victimsupport.org.uk. A range of tools to help people to cope and move forwards after crime can be found at www.mysupportspace.org.uk/moj

General advice

Plymouth Community Homes – **0800 230 6500**
enquiries@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk [facebook.com/PlymouthCommunityHomes](https://www.facebook.com/PlymouthCommunityHomes)
[Twitter @PlymCommHomes](https://twitter.com/PlymCommHomes)

PCH housing team – **0800 230 6500**

Adam Stockman James Gibbs Nicola Street Stephanie Counter

Plymouth City Council – **01752 668000** and press 0





Local support

Reassurance Hub with staff from a range of partner organisations to help you: St Mark's Church: 1 Sanctuary Close, Ford, Plymouth PL2 1EN

Ford Primary School: Cambridge Road, Ford, Plymouth PL2 1PU

You are also very welcome at: Jan Cutting Wellbeing Hub: Scott Business Park, Beacon Park Road, Plymouth PL2 2PQ - **01752 203670**

Wolseley Community Office: Unit 3 Wolseley Trust Business Park, Wolseley Close, Plymouth PL2 3BY - **01752 607449**

LARK Children's Centre: offer virtual and face to face support for families with children aged 0-5.

LARK **01752 313293** (the Beacon) and Morice Town **01752 208660** (Charlotte Street) Family Support Workers from the Council will be spending time in and around the community, to be available to talk to residents if they would like to speak to someone face to face but don't want to go into a building.

Barnardo's have local staff who can provide face to face or phone support for families. Call **01752 362320** from 9am to 4.30pm daily.

Mental health support

Livewell Southwest: Mental health support for adults and children: **0800 923 9323**

The Samaritans: **116123** free from any phone, or **0330 094 5717** (local call charges apply)

The Zone: You can email enquiries@thezoneplymouth.co.uk or call **01752 206626**. Young people can ask to be supported either in person or face to face by appointment

Support for children

Jeremiah's Journey: Helpline on **01752 424348** or email info@jeremiahsjourney.org.uk

Childline: **0800 1111**

Sharing information about what happened
Victim Support 24 hour helpline: **0808 1689 111**

Dedicated Police phone line for witnesses or people with information: **01752 487880**

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PCH RANGER



No two days are the same for the Rangers of PCH. The teams work hard to keep our properties and green spaces in tip top condition. In this issue, we spend a day in the life of the PCH Ranger.

In the morning we went straight to the re-use centre with Rangers, Rod Ransom and Dayne Marshall. The centre is filled with collected items to be either recycled, re-used, or thrown away. No effort is spared to try and give household goods a second life. From bric-a-brac items like pots, plates, kettles, and toasters. To furniture that can be restored and used again for residents in need.

“The whole point is to try and recycle as much as possible”, explained Charge Hand, Donna Vickers. “For residents that move into a house with few, or even no possessions, we can help them out by getting them started with the things they need to furnish their home.”

It’s clear that huge effort goes into making sure that as few things as possible go to waste. In the back of the work van is a fridge-freezer, and some rubbish collected the day before, which is dropped off at the centre.

Once everything was unloaded, the van was cleaned and it’s off to job number two. A shed clearance was next. Rubbish left by a former resident needed to be cleared. It was down to the Rangers to make sure that the shed was spotless and in usable condition for the next person moving in.

Bin bags filled with rubbish are quickly cleared but rubbish wasn’t the only thing in the shed. Creepy crawlies and a group of snails that attached themselves to the inside door are all moved by hand. One by one, they are taken by Dayne to a nearby bush to start a new life. “We never kill bugs” he explained. “If we can just move them along, we always do, there’s no need to squash them or anything.”

In no time at all, the shed is as good as new. Job number three is a property clearance, removing furniture and a few things left behind before the property is deep cleaned. The boys take a quick look around to see what can be salvaged and what needs to be binned before separating everything into “re-use” and “throw away” piles in the back of the van.

In the afternoon we spend time with a different team of Rangers. Mandy Jury and her team have their own designated patch of the city to look after. The afternoon job list included cleaning all the stairwells and weeding at properties in Torridge Way, Efford.

Mandy runs a tight ship. First, the communal stairwells are cleaned and mopped, leaving no spot untouched. She has been keeping these stairwells clean for over seven years. “It’s inevitable”, she said. “You end up getting to know everyone.”

Mandy explained that she thought of the Rangers as the eyes and ears of PCH. The teams spend a lot of time interacting with residents in their communities. An important part of how PCH stays in touch, by having a friendly and familiar face regularly on hand.







After serving with the Royal Marines overseas, Lee Spencer was involved in a road traffic accident that saw his leg amputated from the knee down. It was a moment that changed his life for the most unexpected of reasons.

Lee was born in Dagenham but moved to the area after being stationed at Royal Marine base, 42 Commando, on the outskirts of Plymouth. After falling in love with the area, he and his wife, Claire decided to stay put and make the most of the Dartmoor scenery.

Lee first got a taste for fundraising after he brought a puppy home while serving in Afghanistan. The charity that helped him was run by Plymouth marine, Pen Farthing, who made headlines recently after he and his team made it out of the country after the fall to the Taliban. A grateful Lee asked Pen if there was anything he could do to give back, the answer was simple: “fundraising.”

Lee embarked on a number of charity endurance challenges including a Dartmoor marathon, raising thousands of pounds for good causes in the process.

Tragedy struck in 2014. After stopping on a motorway to help the driver and passengers of a crashed car, Lee was hit by flying debris from an oncoming car that crashed into the vehicle. Thanks to the help of other motorists he survived. Lee was rushed to hospital where doctors were unable to save his limb.

Lee said: “After I lost my leg, I had to redefine who I was in terms of disability, it was only after I took up rowing that I realised I was still the same person.”

Rowing would become a big part of Lee’s life going forward. He decided he would try and row the entire Atlantic Ocean, solo. “I got it in my head that if I could beat the non-disabled record, that would make a statement that nobody should be defined by their disability.”

Lee made headlines in 2019 after becoming the first physically disabled person to row across the Atlantic Ocean. Even more impressively, he beat the non-disabled world record too. This challenge was “the hardest thing” he had ever done. He explained: “I hit a mental wall and didn’t think I could make it at one point. The only time I saw hope was when I finally saw land again.

“At my lowest point, I knew that if I didn’t keep rowing, a strong current would take me, and I would never have made it across.”

At one point, he was the only human being for hundreds of miles in the middle of the ocean. Astronauts aboard the international Space station were at times, the nearest people to him.

After setting off from Portugal, Lee finally reached French Guiana in South America after 60 days, 16hrs and 6 minutes. He beat the previous non-disabled record by 36 days and broke four Guinness World Records in the process.

It was the second time he had rowed the Atlantic, having rowed from the Canaries to Antigua as part of a team of four amputees: “We had three legs between us”, he explained.

Sights are now firmly set on Lee’s next big challenge, something he has called: The Triathlon of Great Britain. In July next year, he will attempt to swim the English Channel, cycle from Lands’ End to John O’Groats and climb the three peaks, Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis, all as part of one endurance challenge. As Lee describes it: “One man, one mission, one thousand two hundred miles.”

To keep up with Lee’s adventures, visit: www.leespencer.co.uk

RESIDENTS' writing class is PEN-STOPPABLE

Creative writing isn't just about penning stories. Being able to write clearly can open doors and improve your ability to communicate in lots of ways.

That's why the team at PCH are excited to announce the re-launch of the creative writing classes at Plumer House.

When the first lockdown began, staff at PCH had to cancel the monthly writing workshops at Plumer House. But the organisers were delighted to learn that their efforts had a lasting effect soon after. A creative spark has seen some attendees continue writing in their free time.

As lockdown lifts, plans are in place to get residents writing again with in-person creative writing classes coming back to Plumer.

"The first 6-week course ran from November – December 2019", Ashleigh Knowles, Resident Learning Co-ordinator explained. "The course covered developing a story's beginning, middle and end; developing character; using speech; trying out literal and figurative language; creating suspense and even writing poetry."

"While a few members of the group were experienced writers, most people were complete beginners, only trying to write creatively for the first time. However, everyone learnt something new, and even the people most reluctant to share their work at the beginning were soon joining in and sharing their stories with the group.

Ashleigh continued: "I personally found the sessions really enjoyable; I think it's really important to be creative and have fun and watching people become more confident and develop their skills was a joy.

"There was due to be another cohort in March 2020 and plans to meet once a month to share stories and learn more but unfortunately this had to be cancelled."

Ashleigh was delighted to learn that during lockdown, some of the budding writers kept at it. She explained: "Some members of the group continued to write about their experiences or producing a variety of short stories. This was really great to see residents putting their skills to good use."

The Old House has been vacant for years. It was surrounded by dead trees, which added to its satanic atmosphere. When it was lightened by electric storms, it shone an eerie light, which did nothing to appease people's concerns.

There were some who said that an eccentric axe-killer had buried his victims in its cellars. Others claimed that a black witches' coven were living there. Yet again, other people has said a psychiatric doctor had also lived there, with his wife and daughter, who were psychotic.

Its location, next to the towns cemetery, did nothing to allay people's fears, or concerns. Especially as one of its occupants was a resident who had been convicted of mass murder and executed. He had been cleared, after his death and was said to haunt the house. Although, it was not physically proved

Letter to Older Self

Looking back on your life and as you grow ever older, make sure you do not fret about that which you have no control over.

Just remember, life is for living and while you're fretting, it's passing you by. The old saying that life is too short will always be true, whatever age you are.

Paul Lane

Home

Home is where the heart is
Home is where the love is
Love from the heart is a joy to behold
As you're wrapped in your homes' gentle fold

Paul Lane

One day there was this man who was out walking his dog. When the dog ran off, the man, whose name was John, went to look for his dog, when he came across what looked like a very old house.

He was wondering about his dog when all of a sudden his dog came running, but just kept running! Like a very frightened dog, he just ran by his master, just kept going, he never went that way again. John couldn't understand, what happened?

But John just wanted to look at this house, because he thought he had seen some sort of light on inside. Also he was very nosy, but he was beginning to think his mind was playing tricks! What really frightened his dog?

John wanted to know more about this ramshackle tumbledown house, so he went again in two weeks time, early evening. When he got there, everything seemed normal but all of a sudden there was a very bright light which John had seen before.

But this time, there was a thing which was being thrown about, smashed, which was very unusual as nobody had lived there for at least fifty years. John was getting very frightened and he just wasn't very brave so he left.

I will leave it up to you: is it a mystery or is his mind playing tricks?

A short story By Margaret Nulbert

PCH nominated for the Holy Grail of housing awards

Serving our superheroes is something we take great pride in. The last 18 months have thrown up many new challenges but staying in touch with our residents has remained at the very centre of what we do.

Which is why we're thrilled to announce that PCH's efforts have been recognised after being nominated for an award from one of the country's top housing bodies.

PCH has been shortlisted for the Outstanding Tenant Engagement award by the Tenant Engagement Experts (TPAS).

These awards are considered the Holy Grail of the social housing sector and PCH has beaten hundreds of other housing associations to go straight to the finals. This means our work has been recognised as among the top six in the country.

Communities Team Manager, Alice Potter, said: "There are normally regional finals before the national finals, which means the competition to get to this stage has been huge this year and puts us in the top 6 in the country.

She added: "The TPAS Awards act as a beacon for best practice, so it's amazing to be recognised in this way. Residents have told us how much they've valued the PCH Connect programme during such a challenging time, and we really appreciate the support we've had from other teams to make it possible."

CEO of Plymouth Community Homes, John Clark, said he was proud of the nomination. He explained: "PCH is proud to have TPAS accreditation and being shortlisted for this award demonstrates our commitment to listening to and involving tenants in the design, delivery and evaluation of our services."

Wish us luck, as the finals are taking place virtually on 8 October. We will keep you all updated in the run up using the hashtag: #Tpasawards2021

Our magazine was being printed just as the award ceremony was taking place. To see if we got even further in the process, go to: www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk



An aerial photograph of a residential area with green fields and houses. The image is used as a background for the text. The houses are mostly two-story buildings with dark roofs. There are green fields and trees in the background. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

PEACE OF MIND FROM A POUND PER WEEK

We all have possessions that we would struggle to live without. When accidents happen, having a contents insurance policy in-place can be a quick way of replacing your much needed goods, at a time when you don't need any extra problems to worry about.

Even if you never claim from your insurance policy, many residents say they feel extra secure in knowing that they're covered if an accident did happen.

Residents like James White in North Prospect, who has kept his policy in-place for years. Luckily, James has never had to make a claim. He explained why he decided to keep it going regardless: "For me it's the simplicity of the whole thing. When I moved house, I just transferred my policy over and it was done. Nice and simple and no complicated decisions to make.

"My contents insurance policy gives me peace of mind. I work most of the day and knowing that my things at home are covered, is something I wouldn't do without.

"I've had my policy for years but have never actually claimed - touch wood! For me it's the security of knowing that all my goods are covered in the event of something unexpected happening. "

He continued: "The policy is really flexible, and you can tailor it to suit the different items you have, whether it's big expensive things, or smaller items. If there was a fire, all of my goods would be replaced, and you can add-on individual items, or even have parts of your property like the items in your garage covered."

Annette Coombes of Tamar House agreed. She had problems at her former property and decided that now was the time to get covered. She explained: "I was burgled in a previous property, so as soon as I felt settled in my new home, it was time to have that extra comfort by knowing that should something go wrong, I would be covered.

"This is my home and I want to protect my things here. It's a reassuring safety net and something to fall back on should something happen. It's a reasonable price and hardly breaks the bank.

"As in my case, years may go by and you never use it, but you'd soon be grateful if you had it in place when needed."

Annette added: "My policy covers just about everything from weather damage, to pets damaging appliances. You can tailor your policy to choose what you want to get covered."

PCH's contents insurance offers a range of benefits designed to help you. There's no excess to pay on the first part of your claim and it even covers things like having your locks changed if your keys are lost or stolen.

If you would like to enquire about getting your possessions covered, there is an application form on our website, which can be found at: plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk/your-home/contents-insurance/

YOUR CHANCE TO SHAPE OUR DECISIONS

We are looking for tenants, leaseholders and shared owners to join our Customer Focus Committee (CFC).

By joining the CFC as co-optees, you could support the board by making sure PCH offers excellent services to all its residents, provides affordable homes, and supports communities.

At PCH we have always been committed to ensuring that our residents are involved in our Governance arrangements - with seats on our Board and Customer Focus Committee reserved for our residents.

We know how important it is to have people with lived in experience of PCH services and communities being involved in our decision-making process. As part of our commitment to the Together with Tenants charter and NHF Code of Governance, we want to do more by increasing the number of co-optees on our CFC up to seven and for the first-time leaseholders and shared owners can also apply.

PCH resident Board member and Chair of the Committee, Lavinia Porfir, explained: "For me Customer Focus Committee is the heart of Plymouth Community Homes.

"Our main aim is to listen and to understand the diverse needs of our customers and make sure that these needs are being met."

She added: "We always look into the perspective of our customers and focus on what goes well and what needs to be improved. As an organisation we are committed to making a real difference to our customers. At CFC we put people at the heart of everything we do, and we ensure that the services are shaped based on their preferences."

The Committee meet up to four times a year - with its current members from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience. The position of CFC co-optee is an interesting and rewarding role which could give you the chance to develop new skills and experience and make a difference to your community - this could even set you on the path to becoming future PCH Board members.

Lavinia explained: "I encourage PCH residents to apply to join the Committee. This is a great opportunity to understand PCH as an organisation, to have your input as a customer and to have your contribution into the community."



If you are interested in joining the Committee and want to find out more, please visit the CFC dedicated webpage on our website or contact the Governance Team on 01752 388364 or governance@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk



HELPING PREVENT CONDENSATION IN YOUR HOME.

If you would like to talk to someone about condensation, damp or mould, please call 080 230 6500. Or there is a lot of great information on our website - plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

At this time of year, we get lots of calls to our contact centre about condensation.

There are lots of things you can do to ensure it doesn't lead to mould growth in your home. When warm, moist air from activities like cooking, showering and bathing hits a cold surface inside your home – like the floor or window – condensation occurs.

Unless the warm, moist air can escape through an open window, window trickle vent, air vent or extractor fan, it will stay in your home until it hits a cold spot where it can condense and develop into mould.

Make sure your entire home is well heated and ventilated to help control condensation. Try to avoid having cold areas in the home. Background heating should be maintained throughout the entire home rather than keeping one room at a high temperature with the heating switched off completely in other rooms. Speak to your energy supplier about the most cost-effective use of your boiler and heating system.

Opening windows for around 10 to 20 minutes in the morning (especially during the colder months of the year) will allow warm, moist air that's built up overnight to be extracted and replaced with colder, drier air.

How to reduce the amount of warm, moist air produced in your home:

- Try not to dry washing on radiators or over clothes horses inside the home as this puts extra moisture into the air.
- If using a tumble dryer ensure it's vented through a window or external wall to prevent warm air escaping. Contact us to request permission to have a tumble dryer vented through an external wall.
- Don't use paraffin heaters or bottled gas heaters in your home – it is against the terms of your tenancy agreement.
- When cooking or having a bath or shower, always use extractor fans in the kitchen or bathroom where fitted.
- Try to get in the habit of using pan lids when cooking; you'll also save money on your fuel bills.
- Keep bathroom and kitchen doors shut whenever possible to limit the movement of water vapour throughout the home.

WINTER IS COMING

Now that autumn is here, many of us will have put the central heating on again for the first time in months.

As the seasons change, so do the potential problems that can arise from colder weather.

Luckily, there's lots of things you can do to keep your boiler and hot water supply working properly.

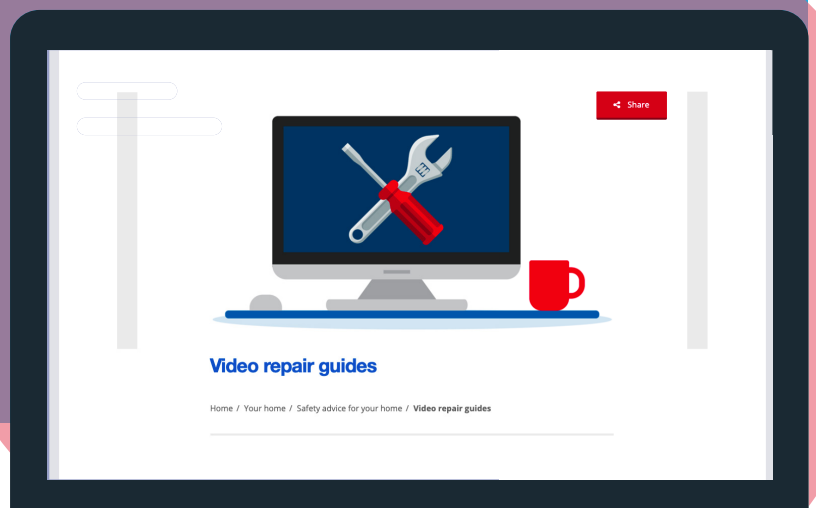
On the PCH website we have several handy video guides for maintaining your boiler during colder months.

But it isn't just boilers and heaters. The change in seasons means there's other things you can do to keep everything working at home.

For example, easy jobs like clearing the falling leaves can stop the drains from getting blocked.

For lots of handy mini tutorials, please visit the PCH website and using the categories on the left-hand side of the screen go to:

- Home > Your home**
- > Safety advice for your home**
- > Video repair guides**





As you may remember we proudly announced that PCH had formally adopted the Together with Tenants Charter in April this year.

Plymouth Community Homes, among a handful of others, was one of the first housing associations in the country to formally adopt the new charter. And we're not looking back!

We remain proud to have signed up to Together with Tenants, which will help us to make sure we have a vision and plan, to be the best housing association we can be.

The charter was created by the National Housing Federation to encourage a stronger relationship between social landlords and residents. The aim is to eventually have all the county's housing associations on board. And to make sure residents' voices are heard loud and clear.

The six commitments in the Charter focus on our: Relationships, Communication, Voice and influence, Accountability, Quality, and how we perform when things go wrong.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Looking for a job with flexible hours to suit you?

Want to make a difference in the lives of others?

As a Home Care Assistant, you can work flexibly with a job that fits around your other commitments.

Jobs are available right now in Plymouth.

Find out more at plymouth.gov.uk/workinhomecare



Fostering a teenager is the most rewarding career in the world.



Receive a fee for a role you'll love.

Call **01752 308762** or visit fosterforplymouth.co.uk



PROVIDING HAPPY HOMES FOR CHILDREN ACROSS PLYMOUTH





Looking for a job with flexible hours to suit you?

Plymouth City Council has just launched a new dedicated campaign to try and encourage more people to consider working in the home care sector.

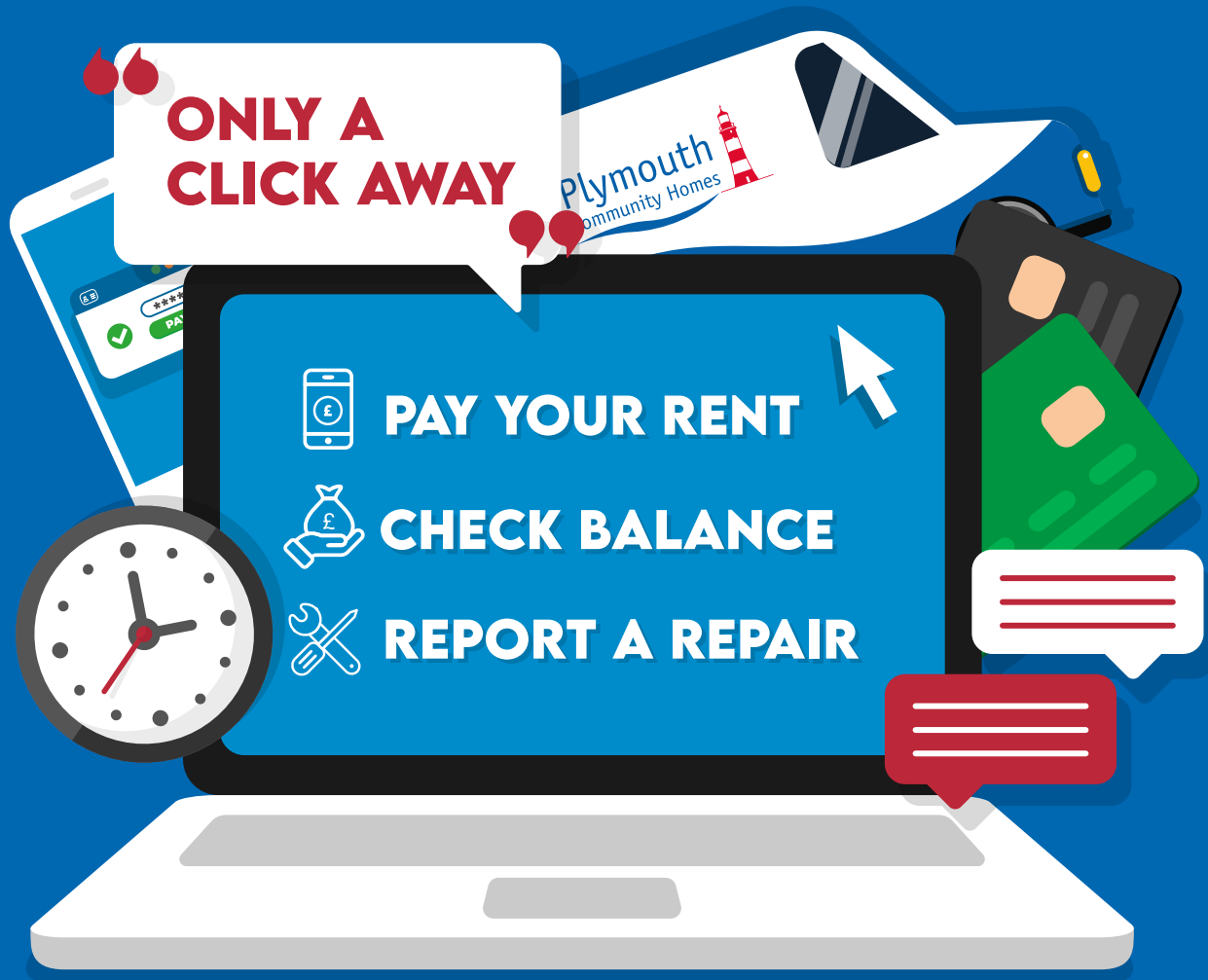
Home Care Assistants are vital to support people to improve and maintain their independence, enabling them to continue living in their own homes for as long as possible. However, a shortage of staff in this sector means there is increased pressure on hospital wards and care homes as people are unable to return home.

Many people don't realise that working as a home support assistant they can choose the hours that suit them.

It's also a job where you can make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable people in Plymouth, giving them the support they need to live independently in their own homes.

No specific qualifications or background in care is required to become a Home Care Assistant, what's more important is that you have a natural calling to care for people.

SIGN UP TO MYPCH



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

mypch.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk

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

Email news@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk.

-  0808 230 6500 / 01752 237990
-  info@plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk
-  plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk
-  twitter.com/PlymCommHomes
-  facebook.com/PlymouthCommunityHomes
-  youtube.com/user/plymouthch



Did you know you can recycle me?

