

# THE PLYMOUTH ALLIANCE



Newsletter - May 2024 edition

Welcome to the latest edition of the Plymouth Alliance Newsletter.

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# PATH - PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

Since 1995 Path has been helping people to maintain or access accommodation. A large part of that has been helping people to access properties in the private rented sector. We are still doing this today through the Private Rented Access Service and wanted to update on some of the things that we are doing.

Many areas including Plymouth have seen rents in the private sector increasing with a low supply of and a high demand for properties. We are really happy that despite this we have still been able to support some people to move to private rented accommodation - 28 households during October to December 2023.

Some of the things we do:

- Discuss renting with people and offer advice. 94 referrals received between Oct and Dec 2023.
- We have a great team including workers that work specifically with people on probation and leaving prison (funded by Probation and DLUHC) and a worker that works specifically with young people.
- Negotiations with landlords and agents to support them and encourage them to work with us.
- Provide help with a deposit guarantee. We have increased the length of this agreement from one to two years to give more time for people to save for their own deposit whilst offering landlords a longer period of cover.
- Provide help with rent in advance. This includes applying to funds such as benevolent funds or Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Support people to maintain their tenancy after they have moved in.
- Visit referring agencies to maintain relationships and encourage referrals. We work with organisations such as Community Connections and temporary accommodation providers to help people move to more secure accommodation.
- Provide tenancy training to Alliance and other staff.
- We are starting a lodging scheme for home owners or Social Housing tenants that have a spare room.
- Work alongside Easylet who manage leased properties and support landlords.

More positive news is that LHA rates are due to increase from April 2024 [Universal Credit LHA rates 24/25](#) which we hope will mean that more people on low incomes will be able to afford their accommodation and it will be more economically viable for landlords to keep and take on tenants in receipt of benefits.

Thank you to all those landlords and Letting agents that we work with to help people in Plymouth find a home. If you are interested in renting your property or if you are thinking about taking a lodger please contact Dave on [David.Ringwood@pathdevon.org](mailto:David.Ringwood@pathdevon.org), if you are considering leasing your property or need help to manage it please contact [easylet@pathdevon.org](mailto:easylet@pathdevon.org)

Dave Ringwood - Path



# BCHA 2024 - 2029 STRATEGIC PLAN

This week BCHA have launched their new [Strategic Plan](#) illustrating a clear, exciting and ambitious roadmap for the next five years.

The Plan sets out a new vision, mission, values and priorities and was co-created in collaboration with BCHA's customers, colleagues and partners over the last year. It clearly reinforces the commitment to addressing homelessness and providing comprehensive support for those with complex social needs in the communities it serves.

Lorraine Mealings, Chief Executive, said "I am thrilled we can now share the culmination of a year's dedication, insight, and collaboration. This Plan is not just a roadmap for our future, it represents our collective commitment to making a profound and positive impact on the lives of people in our community affected by homelessness.



"At the heart of the new Plan is our vision, 'Everyone has a home and the opportunity to thrive'. Our mission 'to empower people by focusing on homes, wellbeing, and learning' is fuelled by our values of being passionate, person-centred, purposeful, and inclusive. These values are fundamental to our identity and guide us in everything we do. Through this strategy, we aim to expand our services and strengthen community ties, ensuring sustainable growth, throughout the southwest, and continued support for all."

BCHA's Customer Steering Group, said: "We are delighted to have been actively involved and able to contribute to the development of this strategic plan and it is encouraging to see that the plan puts us, the customer, at its heart.

In the year building-up to this plan's development, there has been a great shift toward a customer voice within BCHA. We are pleased to note that each service is now committed to holding activities, house and service meetings with customers, which we believe will provide valuable insights into our experiences of using BCHA's services."

The long-awaited Plan anticipates growth in both physical assets and the scale of their support services with strategic efforts aiming at consistently meeting and setting high standards of service and engagement. Priding itself on being a proactive community partner, dedicated to addressing complex social needs through effective partnerships, BCHA identify as being a social housing business that goes beyond providing shelter, enriching lives through comprehensive support services.

The Plan commits in its conclusion that by 2029, BCHA will transform into a modern, agile, and bigger organisation, known for its high-quality service and as an employer of choice.

# FUNDING FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

Everyone will know that we have a housing crisis nationally, with some areas particularly affected, including the South West. There's too little residential accommodation, so we're seeing more people presenting as homeless; and when we manage to provide temporary accommodation people are often stuck there, unable to move on, with new people therefore not getting access. It affects everyone using and working in homelessness services.

So, it's great news that Plymouth has had 4 funding bids to central government be successful and Plymouth received the highest SHAP award in England. The City Council actively worked in collaboration with several service providers to add to what we can all provide. The capital funding is to buy or lease properties and also revenue to fund support for the people who will be housed there.

It's all part of the government's Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP). Plymouth, as a whole, will receive £5m capital and £3m revenue, covering 65 temporary supported bed spaces for rough sleepers, young adults and others. This includes:

- 4 bed supported house for young adults with high support needs (Young Devon)
- 49 supported flats for young adults (YMCA and Young Devon partnership)
- Path – 12 units in 2 new rough sleeper supported houses
- PCC – 10 accessible homes for single homeless individuals and rough sleepers with support and accessibility needs

This won't help everyone, by any means; but it will make a real difference and is very welcome.

Mike Taylor - Path



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS UPDATE

The pressure on local authority homelessness services continues to grow; and Plymouth City Council has seen an 18% rise in approaches this year to date. To ensure we are able to meet our statutory duties as well as helping staff to manage workload, we have recently recruited 5 new officers. The service is supporting around 1000-1200 households with housing and homelessness issues at any given time. The housing market is increasingly challenging, with rental costs in the private sector being considerably higher than local housing allowance rates. This has led to increased pressure on social housing properties, and this coupled with a reduction in the availability of social housing properties is compounding the issue. Being in the South West, we also have a high number of second homes and holiday lets which adds to the supply issue.



The high demand for housing, coupled with a low supply means that we are rarely able to deliver a quick or perfect solution for households. Often households meeting the threshold for interim accommodation will sadly have to remain there for extended periods of time with limited space and facilities, compared to their previous home. Whilst the picture is pretty bleak, there are things you can do to help. These include asking questions of housing officers to give yourself a full understanding of what we can and cannot do in terms of their case, as well as supporting clients by ensuring that their expectations are well managed and realistic. Officers in the team will sometimes need to make unpopular and negative decisions but we are always happy to explain the reasons for these when professionally challenged.

Despite the challenges the team has managed to rehouse 192 households into the private rental or social housing sectors so far this year. Alliance support is hugely appreciated, particularly around offering second chances to repeat homelessness cases and supporting those at risk of losing their accommodation.

Felicity Concannon - Community Connections





# SUPPORT ACCOMMODATION REVIEW TEAM

Developing our collaborative approach with supported housing providers has been critical to the success of our newly formed service and improving the quality of supported housing. Plymouth City Council was awarded funding in 2022 by the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) to establish a Supported Accommodation Review Team (SART). The aims of the team are to drive up the quality of support and accommodation standards, reduce levels of ASB and community complaints; and improve safety within the properties and wider community.

The team are currently working intensively with providers of supported accommodation where there is no regulatory body attached to them.

SART is a multi-disciplinary team spanning the following Plymouth City Council teams: Housing Benefit, Housing Options, Housing Standards, and Safeguarding. The core team comprises of a Project Manager, Housing Standards Officer, Housing Options and Benefits Officer and a Community Outreach Worker.

The Housing Inspection Officer has inspected 153 dwellings. The majority of properties have been in good condition and met the licensing and regulatory standards. However, there have been properties with Category 1 and Category 2 Hazards. We are working alongside providers to ensure prompt resolution. Only one improvement notice has been issued during the time that the team has been operational because hazards were not removed within agreed timescales.

The Housing Options and Benefit Officer and the Community Outreach Worker have been visiting properties and speaking to residents about their experiences of their supported housing. The majority of residents we speak to say that they feel safe and receive the right amount of support. Where this isn't the case, the team work with the provider and the Housing Benefit Team to ensure the right levels of support and benefits are in place.

A Single Access Gateway has been set up and acts as an entry point for new providers. This sets out the requirement and expectations for them to establish themselves as a supported housing provider in the city.

Checks include but are not limited to:

- Provider verification
- Ownership verification
- Rent and eligible service
- Property
- Safeguarding/Welfare
- Governance and due diligence

The Single Access Gateway was designed using feedback from the pilot area in other parts of the country.

If you are increasing or decreasing your provision, establishing new supported accommodation or have any questions please contact us by emailing [SART@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:SART@plymouth.gov.uk)

# CHANGING FUTURES

A poster for the Passport Project. At the top, it features logos for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Changing Futures Plymouth, Plymouth City Council, and the Community Fund. The main text asks: 'Have you had to repeat your story to multiple services multiple times? Did you have to complete multiple forms that all asked the same thing?'. Below this, it says: 'If you answered yes to any of these questions, keep on reading! We need people like you to help us create a passport style tool that will enable people to take control of their information and share with organizations as they see fit.' It then provides contact information: 'Passport Project Katy.Krysiak@plymouth.gov.uk 01752 305628'. At the bottom, there is a QR code with a 'SCAN ME' label, a paperclip, and a coffee cup in the background.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

CHANGING FUTURES PLYMOUTH

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY FUND

**Have you had to repeat your story to multiple services multiple times?**

**Did you have to complete multiple forms that all asked the same thing?**

If you answered yes to any of these questions, keep on reading! We need people like you to help us create a passport style tool that will enable people to take control of their information and share with organizations as they see fit.

For more information about the project and focus group, please scan the QR code below or reach out using the contact details provided.

**Passport Project**  
**Katy.Krysiak@plymouth.gov.uk**  
**01752 305628**

SCAN ME

We are still recruiting for participants with lived experience for a focus group to help co-design the Passport Tool – with sessions planned for end of May.

CASS+ recently shared some information about The Ideas Space, which is facilitated by Gemma Gowan [Ideas Space from Changing Futures - CASS Plus](#)

## Become a Community Digital Volunteer

Do you want to support people in your community whilst developing your own skills and experience?

Community digital volunteers will play a key role offering informal advice, information and support to adults in their local community who either want to get online, learn how to use a computer for the first time, or improve their confidence with the basics.

### Training dates:

**Thursday 2nd May:** 10.00 – 13.00 **OR**  
**Friday 10th May:** 09.30 – 12.30 at **Hamoaze House**

You only need to attend one of these sessions

email: [kevin.tapscott@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.tapscott@plymouth.gov.uk) for more info



Scan above or apply at:  
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/community-digital-volunteers>

There is a new pilot being delivered in Partnership with PCC/Changing Futures/Hamoaze House, here's the link to apply:  
[Community digital volunteers | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/community-digital-volunteers)



# SHEKINAH UPDATE/EVENTS

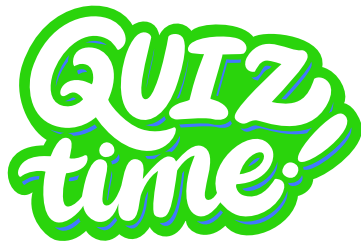
## New Shekinah Premises

As you might know, we moved to our new premises at Stonehouse Creek last month. We celebrated with a networking event on the 17th of April, which was well-attended and a great success.

Our new location allows us to offer additional services to our clients, including eye and ear care and banking services.



## Shekinah Golf Day



## Shekinah Quiz Night

**VAULT 53**

**Shekinah quiz night**  
**Friday 21st June 2024**  
**6.30pm with Rum cocktail on arrival**  
**Finger buffet included**  
**Prize for the winning team**

**Venue**  
Mutley Distillery Limited  
53 Mutley Plain  
Mutley  
Plymouth  
PL4 6JP

**Raffle**  
**£18 per person**

For more details please contact Dani on;  
daniela.austin@shekinah.co.uk 07394 566425

**BORINGDON PARK GOLF CLUB**

**shekinah**  
building lives and futures

**Shekinah Golf day**

**Friday 12th July**  
Boringdon Park Golf Club

Breakfast baps from 0830  
Tee Time from 0930

**Team of 4 players**  
£200  
including all fees &  
1 course evening meal

Sponsorship  
opportunities start from  
£25!

Prizes for the top 3 teams,  
longest drive and nearest  
the pin!

Auction and Raffle prizes to  
be won!

Please get in touch if you  
would like to know more!

Main sponsor for the day

**KIER**

For more details email daniela.austin@shekinah.co.uk  
07394566425





# THE ALLIANCE NOTICE BOARD

## Hamoaze House and The Green Devonport Partnership

Hamoaze is delighted to be working with The Green Devonport Partnership, a group of local community organisations and residents who came together with the aim of improving green spaces in Devonport - to improve the appearance of the local area, increase biodiversity, and offer opportunities for people locally to get involved in nature and green spaces.

The group is co-ordinated by Zebra Collective, a worker co-operative based on Devonport. The group organise local action days to work on green spaces, and works alongside the Council's Green Communities Team on projects such as clearing and re planting the planters on Marlborough Street (a local shopping street). Anyone who lives or works in Devonport is very welcome to join.

As part of their collective they have been working alongside the National Trust, Hamoaze has been able to provide a nursery area for the young plants in our gardens and poly tunnel. Elliot and Henry from the National Trust have been attending Hamoaze every Tuesday afternoon and with the help of our green fingered clients have supported the re planting of Marlborough street.

If you have any clients that are interested in gardening please contact Claire at Hamoaze or Debbie from The Green Devonport Partnership - email [debbie@zebra.coop](mailto:debbie@zebra.coop) / [cogorman@hamoazehouse.org.uk](mailto:cogorman@hamoazehouse.org.uk)

## Alliance Induction Sessions

Alliance induction sessions will be running every quarter from Monday 3rd June. These sessions take place in the training room at Hyde Park House from 3pm - 4pm on the following dates.

To book a place for you or a colleague, please check with your manager and email [amy.mackay2@nhs.net](mailto:amy.mackay2@nhs.net)



# THE ALLIANCE NOTICE BOARD

## Partnerships and Pathways Sessions

On 1 May, we held our busiest session to date with over 30 attendees! It was a great session, with interesting discussions and some good networking between colleagues. We hope attendees have found the 2 sessions so far this year useful and we look forward to welcoming you to the sessions in the second half of the year.

We are now taking bookings for the later sessions - sessions will take place on Tuesday 15 October and Wednesday 20 November, at Hyde Park House, starting at 9:30am until 12pm.



If you would like to book a place, please check with your manager and email the Alliance Business Support Coordinator, Amy - [amy.mackay2@nhs.net](mailto:amy.mackay2@nhs.net)



## Tenancy Training

Path are offering Tenancy Training for staff. They have in person and an online sessions available. If you would like to book on, please e-mail [Terriann.Britzman@pathdevon.org](mailto:Terriann.Britzman@pathdevon.org)

We hope this is a good way to help arm Plymouth's workforce with the knowledge needed to assist people with housing issues. These sessions will cover:

- Legal requirements of landlords
- Legal obligations of tenants
- Different types of eviction notices
- Finding and securing private rented accommodation
- Getting deposits, rent in advance and applying for benevolent funds
- Finding furnishings, white goods and other local resources.

There is a limit of 12 people for in-person sessions at the Path offices in the Harwell Centre. There will be facilities for tea and coffee.

Dates:

Tuesday 21st May  
11am - 2pm in person

Thursday 20th June  
11am - 2pm Teams

Tuesday 16th July  
11am-2pm in person

# THE ALLIANCE NOTICE BOARD



## Plymouth Mental Health REG

Plymouth Mental Health Recovery and Empowerment Group CIC (Plymouth REG) is a mental health organisation that offers people the opportunity to explore mental health and recovery through our free, open access workshops. Our in-person workshops are designed to provide people with the knowledge and resources they need to live a meaningful, productive, and fulfilling life, and to gain the necessary skills to address mental health issues as part of their own recovery journey.



Finally, Plymouth REG aims to inspire, empower, and educate anyone in Plymouth who wants to improve their wellbeing and anyone who is interested in learning about mental health.

[www.plymouthreg.com](http://www.plymouthreg.com)

Thank you for reading The Plymouth Alliance Newsletter, we hope you enjoyed it.

Your feedback is really important to us and it's really useful to know if we're showing you the right things that are interesting and useful to you. The first three people to fill in the survey below will win a £10 love2shop voucher:

<https://forms.office.com/e/TJQ4HZbxB4>