

# Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Housing Priority

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# Portsmouth Homelessness Context

# Homelessness

**Portsmouth experiences proportionately very high levels of homelessness.**

Demand has doubled over the past decade from around 1000 applications a year applications to 2000 applications last year.

We expect that figure to be between 2500 to 3000 in 2023.

The national average is 11.7 homeless applications received per 1000 of the population.

Portsmouth City Council is receiving 20.3 homeless applications per 1000 of the population.

# Homeless Applications

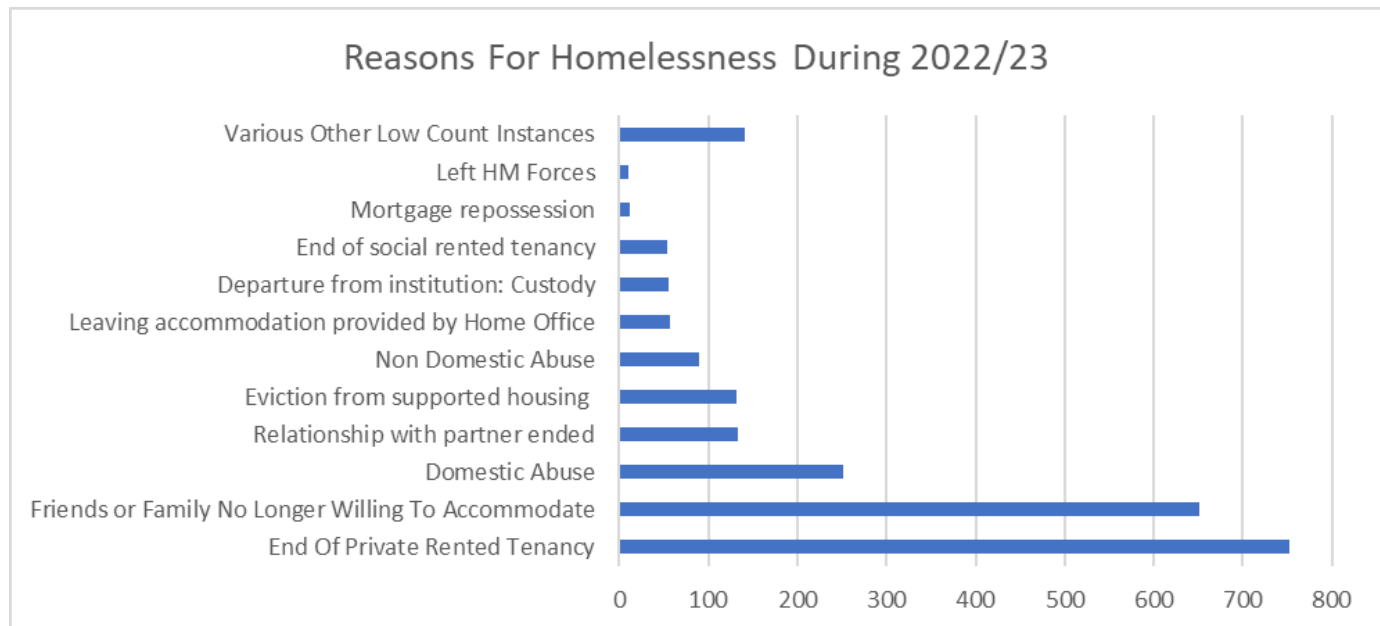
**In the last quarter of 2023/24, Portsmouth City Council received 676 homeless applications.**



# Causes of Homelessness

## Causes of homelessness:

The leading cause of homelessness in Portsmouth is the end of private rented tenancies; followed by friends/family no longer being able to accommodate and homeless due to fleeing domestic abuse.



## Statutory Duty to provide Temporary Accommodation

**The Council has a statutory duty to provide interim/ temporary accommodation to homeless applicants in “priority need”.**

Temporary accommodation includes:

- Council owned temporary accommodation
- Accommodation leased from private property owners
- Supported temporary accommodation
- Accommodation managed by a private company
- B&B and hotel accommodation

# Demand for Temporary Accommodation

**Over the past 5 years, demand for temporary accommodation has increased by almost 300%.**

Number of households in temporary accommodation

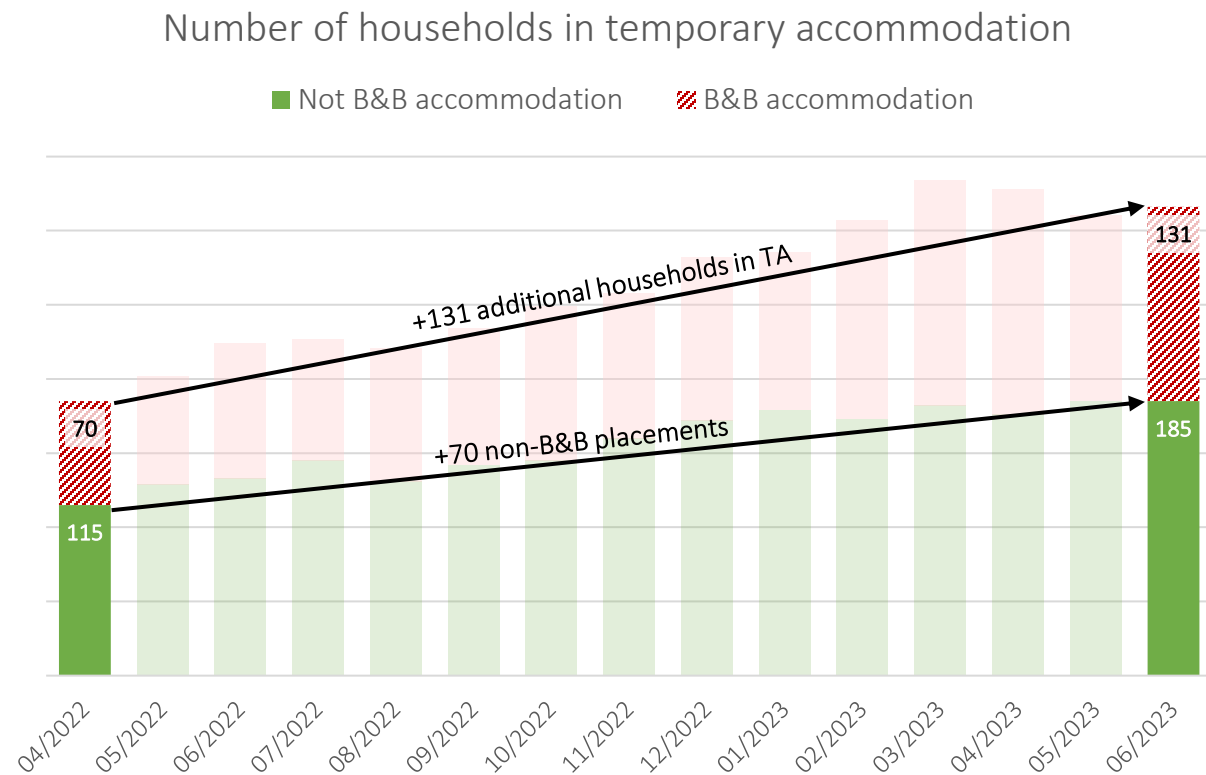


# Providing the right accommodation

## We aim to reduce our reliance on B&B and hotel accommodation use.

We continue to add to our portfolio of good temporary accommodation ensuring that accommodation options provide good facilities and appropriate support.

Sadly, increased demand across the last year has meant a need to still heavily rely on B&B's and hotels to accommodate singles and couples.



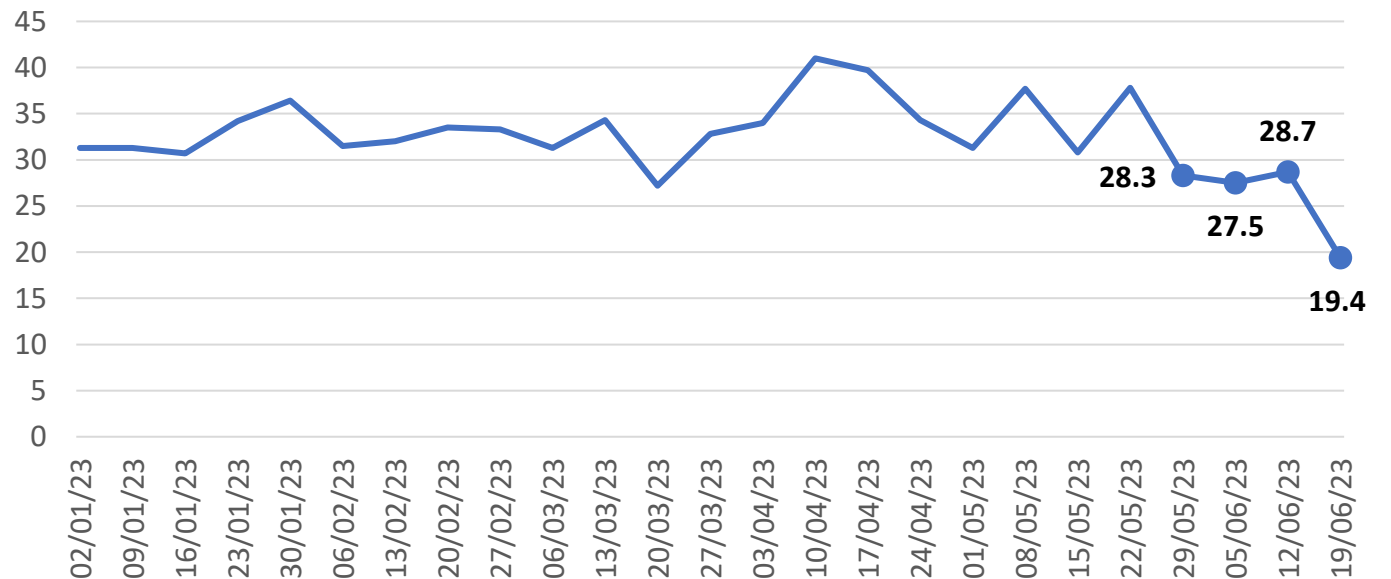


# Ending the use of B&B temporary accommodation for families

Since April 2022, the Council has increased its provision of non-B&B temporary accommodation by 70 units (61%).

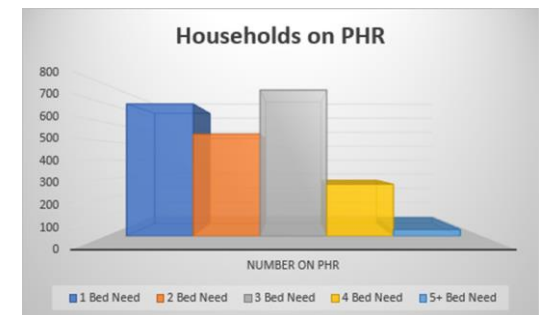
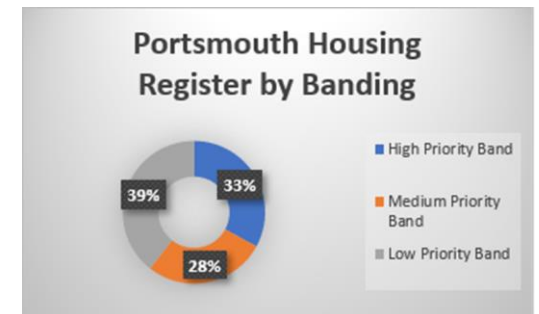
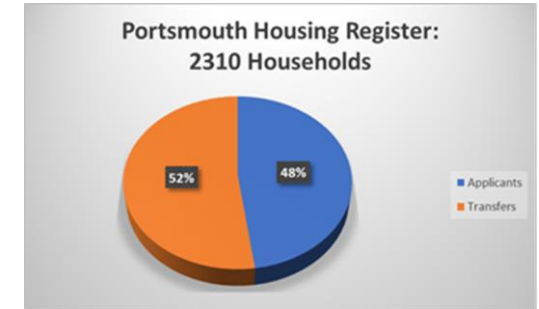
Unfortunately, demand for temporary accommodation over the same period has risen by more than 70%; however, we are now seeing the average number of days a family is in B&B emergency accommodation start to come down.

Average number of days a family spends in B&B accommodation



# Housing Register

- Once an assessment is complete and a duty to house accepted the applicant is registered.
- The housing register currently shows 2310 households being in need.
- The register aims to ensure that those in most need are allocated property first.
- This is done through an allocation policy.





# Housing Priority – Key Activity Areas

## Key Activity Areas

1. Implementing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to provide support for those vulnerable people in greatest need of housing.
2. Work to develop models of housing that suit people at different stages in their lives and reflect their needs.
3. Develop stronger models of support for landlords and tenants to support long term, successful tenancies.

# Key Activity 1: Implement the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

- We currently have two separate strategies which cover homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Our existing homelessness strategy runs till the end of 2023.
- The Homelessness Act 2002 explains what we need to consider in our review and sets the frequency of review and publication of the strategy as every 5 years.
- We are required to review our practice and to embed this learning within our new strategy. The strategy must include how we will secure sufficient accommodation now and in the future.
- Our strategy is supported by a partnership board

# Homelessness Review and Strategy/ Consultation Timeline

- Our review work has shown a need to combine our two strategies into one and to view rough sleeping within the context of homelessness rather than as a standalone issue.
- A review into Homelessness, and all activity relating to homelessness, in Portsmouth is currently underway. The findings of this review will inform the Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028, which is due for consultation and publication before the end of the year.

# Homelessness Review and Strategy/ Consultation Timeline

- So far, we have spoken with service users, partner agencies and other stakeholders to understand what they want from the homeless strategy.
- This has included qualitative and in-depth conversations with people who have used homeless services in the city.
- Formal consultation will commence on completion of the draft strategy; Health & Wellbeing Board members will be invited to participate in the formal consultation.

Emerging  
Themes from  
Strategy Review

Prevent Homelessness

Relieve Homelessness

End Rough Sleeping

Provide the Right Accommodation

Provide the Right Support

Communication and Partnership



Key Activity  
Area 2: Work to  
develop models  
of housing that  
suit people at  
different stages  
in their lives and  
reflect their  
needs

During 2022 we identified that complex individuals were living in Temporary Accommodation without support which they needed to sustain occupation.

In October 2022 PCC and Two Saints began piloting a Supported Temporary Accommodation Scheme.

The scheme provides 32 units with kitchen and laundry facilities.

Key Workers provide specialist support to the residents on site, including help around budgeting and money management, physical/mental health and emotional wellbeing, and maximising education, training and employment opportunities.

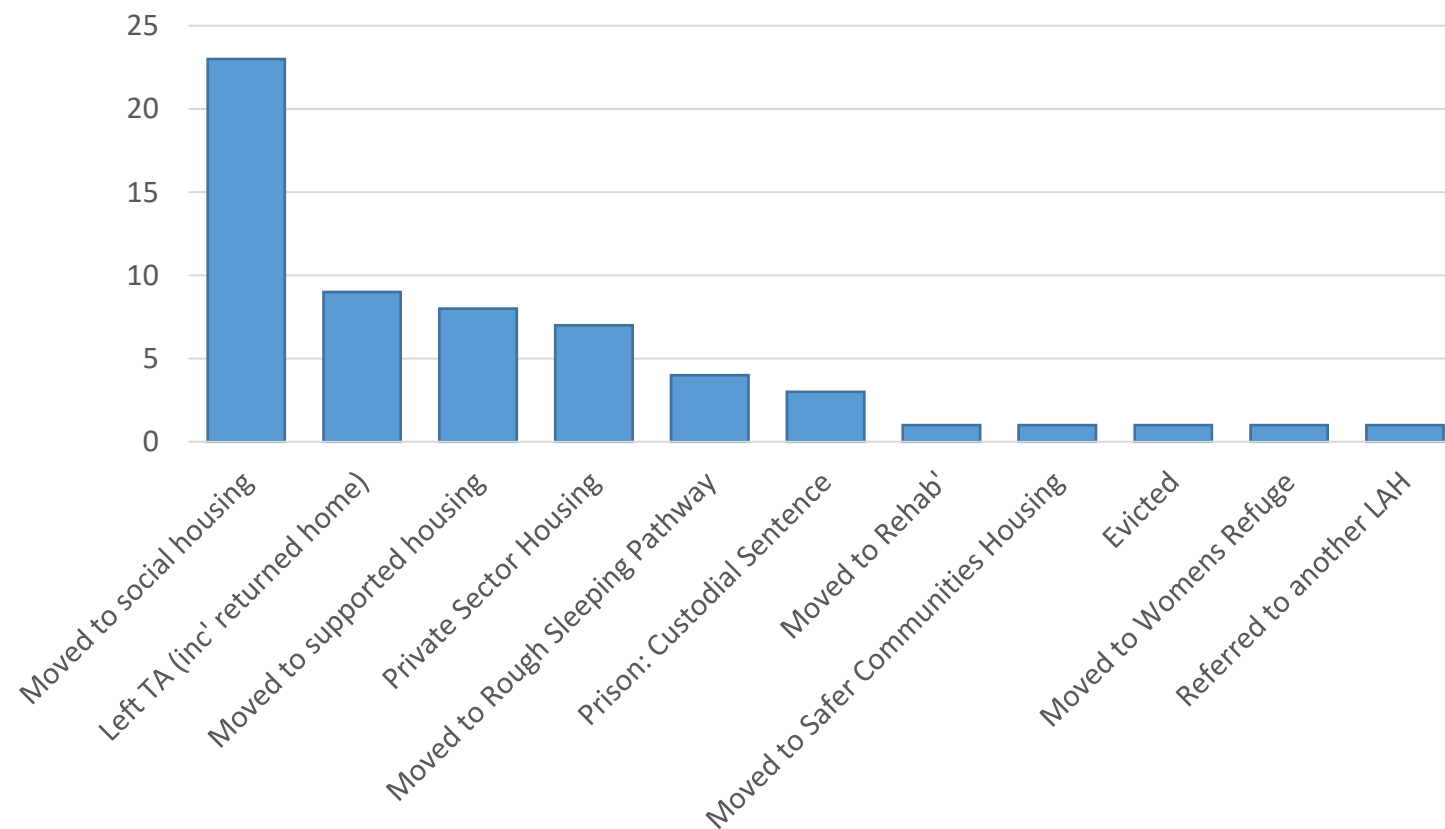
Those housed in Supported Temporary Accommodation have access to better facilities than available in B&B settings, whilst the support provided ensures they feel more valued and better prepared to take the next steps to resolve their homelessness.

We are looking at ways to expand the pilot over the coming months.

# Supported Temporary Accommodation

Of the 59 homeless applicants to have moved through the supported temporary accommodation scheme, 53% moved to social housing or into a private rented tenancy.

Another 24% moved into supported housing (this figure includes those moving to alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres and into the Rough Sleeping Pathway).



Key Activity 3:  
Develop stronger  
models of support  
for landlords and  
tenants to  
support long  
term, successful  
tenancies

We provide support to landlords across the city by:

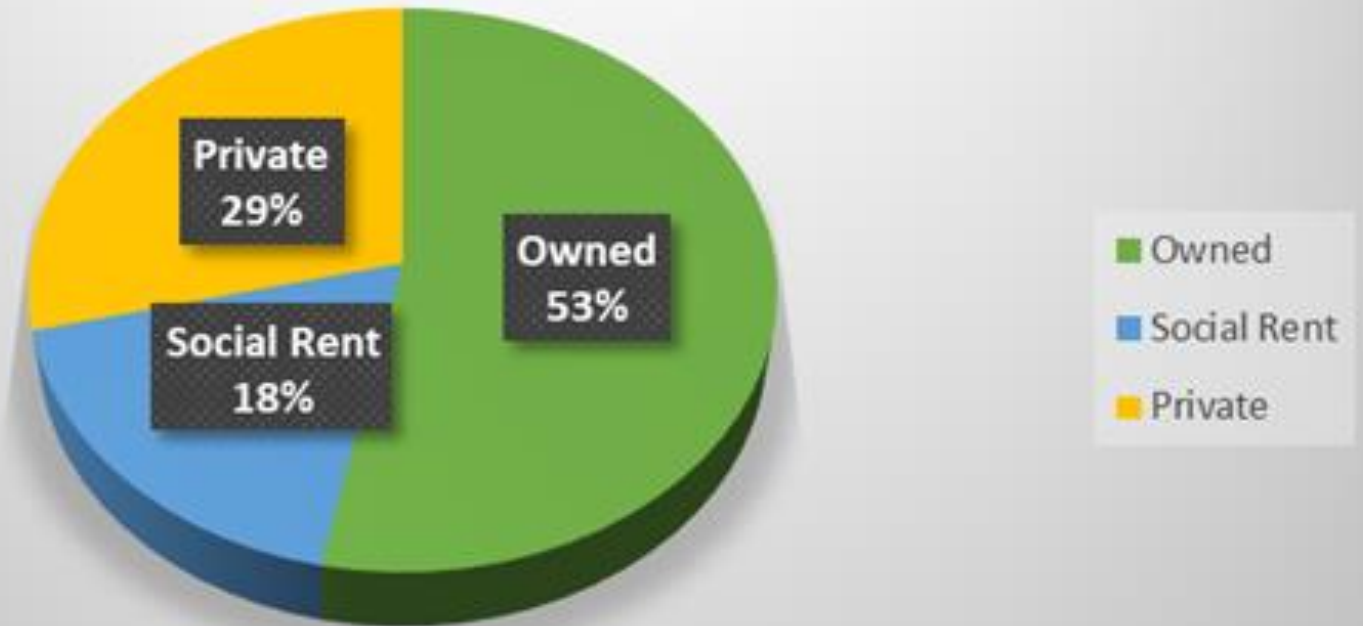
- Advice around repairs and changes to properties which may be needed to comply to HHSRS.
- We have the Private Rented Sector Board which discusses current issues impacting the sector.
- In the process of setting up an online forum for all Portsmouth landlords.
- Working with landlords to address damp and mould in their properties whether they be in social housing or the private sector and the role that PCC is playing to support this work.

# Damp and Mould

- Damp and mould is not a new phenomenon in UK homes but following the coroner's November 2022 report into the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, which made a direct link between the damp conditions in his home and his death, the issue has rightly been given more focus both nationally and locally.
- As a local authority PCC's responsibilities to manage damp and mould varies dependent on the tenure type of the property concerned.
  - Local Authority Housing role of the landlord.
  - Private Rented Sector supporting landlords and tenants and where necessary taking enforcement action.
  - Housing Association working collaboratively to ensure consistent approaches across the city.

The breakdown of tenures types across Portsmouth as of 2021 indicate that 47% of homes are rented.

## Breakdown of Residences in Portsmouth



# Context



In November 2022 DLUHC asked all larger registered providers of social housing to submit evidence to them about the extent of damp and mould in tenants' homes and their approach to tackling it.



As the largest provider of social housing in the city PCC has always investigated and responded to incidents of damp and mould where they have come to our attention.



As a landlord we were already reviewing how we responded to these incidents and had made improvements to the process which allows us to provide a more robust response with the intention that residents feel more supported to get damp and mould incidents in their homes resolved.

# PCC as a landlord

- As a social housing provider, we utilise our expertise to assess the priority of repairs that are needed in our tenants' homes. Where any health and safety issues are identified these will always be treated as a priority by PCC and our contractors.
- All repair requests are recorded on our repairs database to enable us to track and manage repairs in partnership with our contractors. Using this database, we can complete a key word search such as "damp/mould" to inform us of how many active repairs cases we have connected to damp and mould or how many reports of damp and mould we have had over a certain period.
- We are then able to identify trends in particular areas and deploy surveyors to inspect and assess if further investigation and/or remedial works are required.
- We also utilise our frontline staff and contractors to report issues on behalf of tenants if they identify individual issues or trends during their visits to tenants' homes. As a management team we also review complaints and disrepair claims to establish if there are any aspects of our repairs and maintenance service that need to be improved, including our response to damp and mould enquiries.



We have seen an increase in the reporting of incidents of damp and mould during 2022 compared with previous years. We see this increased reporting as an opportunity to better understand an issue which may for some time have gone under reported.

Damp and mould issues and the risks they pose to health have been given considerable focus in the press which may be responsible for some of this increase.

We have experienced wetter autumns and winters which can mean changes in the way people live in their homes with windows open less often and washing may be dried indoors more often

The fuel crisis has led to concerns in most households about the cost of putting on heating on a regular basis which can also mean lower temperatures in homes contributing to damp and mould growth

Social landlords across the city including PCC have been increasingly proactive in identifying cases of damp and mould.



# When a PCC tenant reports damp and mould

- When a tenant reports damp and mould in their home a surveyor will visit them to assess the extent of the problem, provide advice on managing the moisture levels in their home and arrange for any repairs or works needed to mitigate the impact of moisture in the property.
- This may be additional radiators, vents, extraction units or repairing windows.
- The surveyor will also return to the property a month or two after the works have been completed to ensure that the situation has been rectified and that the damp and mould has been eradicated.

# Using technology

- PCC surveyors will use technology to assist them in detecting the levels and causes of damp in a home.
- Protimeters are used to measure moisture within the walls.
- Temperature gauges are used to measure the temperature of wall surfaces.
- Humidity gauges to measure humidity within the property and demonstrate the impact of ventilation.
- We will also occasionally install monitors that are left in the property that can measure room temperature, humidity and moisture to see how the property performs over time. This has typically used where we have identified several damp incidents within a block to help us to understand if the issues are related to the building structure or design, but we will also deploy this technology to individual properties where there is an unusually high level of damp and mould to better understand a property.

# The role of non-technical officers

- Whilst our surveyors are practiced at assessing damp and mould and providing advice to residents to assist them in managing moisture levels in their homes this isn't the case with all our resident facing staff.
- To increase our knowledge of homes affected by damp and mould and to reduce the risks that our residents may be exposed to, we have worked to inform all of our Housing Officers on how to respond when they identify potential damp and mould issues in the homes that they visit.
- Housing Officers will provide advice to residents on managing moisture levels within their homes and will arrange for a surveyor to attend where appropriate, to assess for any repair issues or actions needed to remove the issue.
- A follow up visit will also be conducted by the surveyor to ensure that the problem hasn't returned.

# Advice we provide

We have updated our advice leaflet for tenants on how to manage moisture levels in our council homes explaining the importance of seeking advice and intervention as early as possible.



However, it's recommended that rooms are kept at between 18-21°C to keep you warm and healthy.



Condensation is less likely to form if the temperature of your home is above 15°C.

Switched on  
Portsmouth

# SWITCHED ON

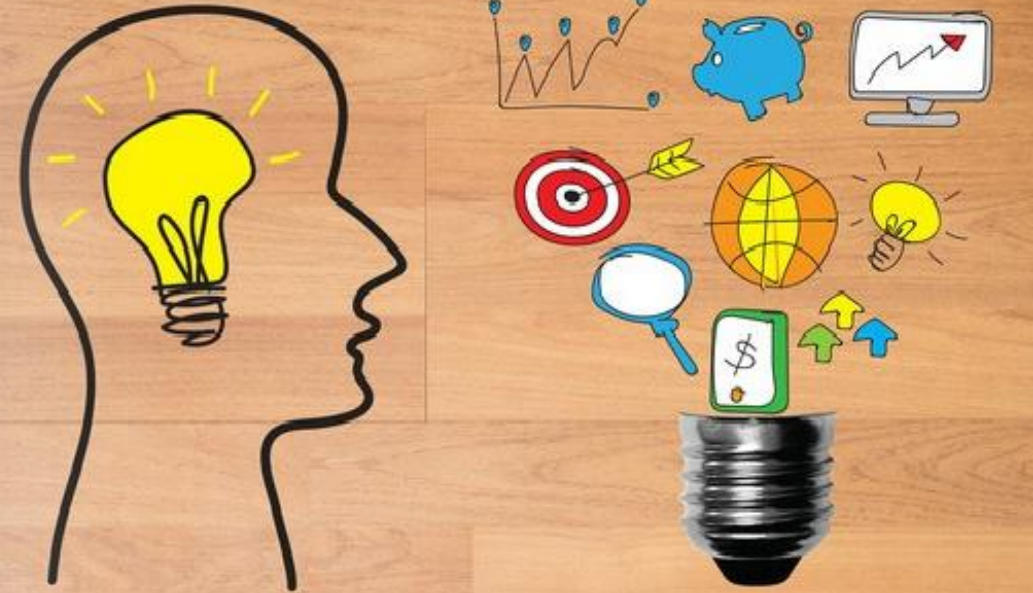
PORTSMOUTH

If you're struggling to afford your heating, help is available. Visit our website at: **[switchedonportsmouth.co.uk](http://switchedonportsmouth.co.uk)** for energy saving advice or call our freephone number **0800 260 5907** to receive free energy and financial advice, as well as onward referrals into larger schemes.

# Wider Training for all PCC officers

We also recognise the need for all PCC officers that may be in Portsmouth residents' homes to be able to damp and mould, to be able to offer advice on managing moisture levels in homes and to be able to sign post residents to further help and advice depending on their tenure type.

We are currently developing training which will be made available to all directorates for their officers to use to support them in offering the appropriate advice to residents that they come in touch with.



# E-LEARNING

Any  
Questions?

Thoughts for development session discussion topics:

- Damp and Mould training
- Emergent themes from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
  - Preventing Homelessness
  - Communication and Partnership