

# SWITCHED ON

PORTSMOUTH

**IMPACT REPORT**  
**2019 - 2020**

Switched On Portsmouth was launched in November 2019 by Portsmouth City Council to provide a comprehensive service to offer Portsmouth, Gosport and Havant residents ways in which they can save energy and money in their homes. The Switched On brand and website has been built upon work already being undertaken by the Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings department to scale up the work being done to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency.

Our services are always evolving; we have expanded our team, have invested in training and sourced new schemes and pots of funding in order to be able to provide a holistic service for our most vulnerable residents. We offer a combination of expert money and energy saving advice, as well as in-depth support and free energy saving measures. Every aspect of our work is focused on bringing real savings and innovations to local residents to help them reduce their fuel bills, lower their carbon footprint, and to ensure they can afford to stay safe and warm at home.

A large proportion of the external funding for Switched On runs from June to May, and it is this period that we review in this report. The 2019–2020 funding year has been a year of rapid development for the service, with achievements and recognition received; such as winning the National Energy Efficiency Award for Social Responsibility at the end of 2019 and the South East Energy Efficiency award for Council Of The Year in 2020, as well as being highly commended as Vulnerable Customer Support Campaigner.

We have seen a huge increase in our reach, with an increase in referrals to our schemes of 62% from previous years. We do recognise there are still homes to reach and we continue to host drop-in events and training with staff who work with vulnerable people to make sure the service filters down to the hard to reach cohorts.

Portsmouth City Council also launched its Energy and Water at Home Strategy in 2020. This strategy holistically sets out future actions to be carried out to reduce the rate of fuel poverty; as well as expanding our energy and water efficiency offer to all households in the city, not just those in the vulnerable category.

*'The development of the Switched On Service has provided more households in Portsmouth with holistic energy support than ever before; helping them to feel warm and safe at home. The energy saved in each home contributes to an important reduction in carbon emissions in the city; improving air quality and helping Portsmouth City Council towards its net zero 2030 target. I look forward to seeing the Switched On service continue to build on the scope and scale of the support on offer, as outlined in the Home Energy and Water Strategy, which sets the direction for this service for the coming five years.'*

**Councillor Vernon-Jackson, Leader of the Council**

# What we do

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## Energy and money saving service



We work closely with the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP) to offer eligible residents a completely FREE energy and money saving service.

During the free home visit, residents will benefit from expert advice and free small energy saving measures, with onwards referrals for income maximisation and larger projects.

## First time gas central heating



Eligible residents can receive a fully funded gas central heating system where they are currently heating their home using other expensive methods.

The scheme funds up to £6,000 worth of works with no cost to the household; including all equipment and gas connections, if required.

## Emergency boiler replacement



During the winter months, eligible owner occupiers can benefit from a free boiler repair or replacement when their gas boiler breaks down or is condemned. To provide extra support during the coronavirus pandemic it is also available over summer 2020.

New, highly efficient replacement installations, or repairs, will be completed within 10 working days from survey.

## White goods replacements



Residents who partake in the LEAP service can access our scheme which provides free white goods replacements.

All goods provided have an energy efficiency rating of A+, meaning they cost less to run, helping households save money and carbon, as well as having access to basic necessities.

## Support



We provide online resources through Switched On Portsmouth, and provide direct support to households over the phone. We also attend community events, and deliver training and support to local charities.

## Switch energy supplier



We offer a simple energy switching service to help residents save money on energy bills. It's quick and easy to compare suppliers and tariffs to ensure that households are only paying what they need to when it comes to their energy bills.

# How we have helped



**18,000+**  
page views on  
Switched On  
Portsmouth  
online



**465**  
home energy advice  
visits completed



**137**  
free gas central  
heating systems  
installed



total  
savings to  
residents of  
**£818,844**

**23**  
free white  
goods allocated



**1,449**  
referrals for  
support



**73**

free emergency boiler  
replacements

**1,487**  
tonnes of carbon dioxide  
saved



**116**  
energy tariff  
switches made



**2,591**  
small energy saving  
measures received



**47** community events attended  
**29** training sessions provided



**94**  
Fuel top up vouchers issued  
since March lock down

# Holistic support

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Cynthia is an elderly lady, who was living by herself and had an inefficient heating system. She was referred by Citizens Advice to our free home energy and money saving service.

Through this one referral, she was able to benefit from receiving:

- A free gas central heating system
- Free low energy LED lighting
- Free energy efficiency advice
- Free loft insulation
- A more cost-effective energy tariff
- Increased income and benefits

In total, Cynthia received £4,200 worth of free home energy improvements which deliver her an annual saving of £3,740 including increased income.



*"I am so happy with my new heating system, the installers worked miracles. I can't tell you enough how brilliant the whole process was, they were lovely people. I'd give the scheme 15 out of 10"*

**Cynthia**

*"AgilityEco and Switched On Portsmouth have worked together to bring a range of social and environmental benefits to improve both resident comfort and energy efficiency in homes in the city.*

*Working with Switched On Portsmouth AgilityEco has delivered a range of projects to provide holistic help and support to fuel poor Portsmouth residents. The efforts of a wide range of services and PCC employees have enabled thousands of residents to benefit from energy advice, income maximisation support as well as upgrades to the fabric of their home and their heating systems.*

*These interventions have significant and even life-changing impacts for those who need them most. Having worked with the team, I am confident that this level of engagement with the service we offer will continue and that this enables even more residents to benefit in the future"*

**Joe McMullen, AgilityEco**

# The past 6 months

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## AirEx

Portsmouth City Council supported an innovation trial of a new UK innovation product by Airex. Their 'smart ventilation control unit' replaces a traditional airbrick and controls airflow dependent on temperature, humidity and air quality. This is thought to save households 10% on their heating bills, and will improve the comfort of their home. 38 properties received this product within Portsmouth, and results of the trial will be published shortly.

## Energy Redress

An additional £170,000 was secured via the Energy Redress scheme in partnership with local charity The Environment Centre. This funding will support further intervention in vulnerable households, with an aim of reaching 4,000 hard to reach households, providing a freephone advice line and an in-depth support scheme for those requiring further assistance. The scheme will also be able to offer onwards referrals to local charity organisations, and to our other schemes offering energy efficiency measures.

# Coronavirus support

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The coronavirus crisis meant Switched On moving operations to remote working, however the service remained uninterrupted, and was able to bring new support forward. Concise information and advice, promoted through the website, was visited 3,500 times by those looking for support.

By securing Energy Redress funding, and forging links with charity the Environment Centre, meant that when the coronavirus crisis lead to homes being locked down, pre-payment meter top-ups were able to be

made available to vulnerable households who could not otherwise afford energy for their homes. Over £3,000 was provided to 94 households in crisis during this time, allowing people to top up their meters. This efficient allocation of funding to those most in need meant that the council was in a position to successfully bid for more external funding when it was made available. The efforts of the team has meant that no home in the city has had to go without gas and electricity during this time, either because they are unable to leave their homes, or afford to top up their meter.

### Improved Reach

445% increase in gas central heating installations.

45% increase in free home energy visits

### New support this year

Switched On Portsmouth Website

Free white goods scheme

Innovation product trials

Top up voucher service

# Future aims

In March 2020, Portsmouth City Council approved a Home Energy and Water Strategy to focus our ambitions for reaching every household in the city. The strategy aims to build upon the platform laid by the ongoing fuel poverty work to create an offer for all households, whilst continuing to support those most in need. We are excited that in only a few short months since the

publication of the strategy, we have already begun to expand our services, finding funding to support projects which align to its aims. Key themes of the strategy and action plan includes providing additional support for fuel poverty and bringing innovation to the work we do; as well as the provision of help and advice to every household in the city.



**£2,500,000** of external funding to be sourced



**£2,000,000** of lifetime savings and additional income for residents



**1,500** households helped to reduce water



**1,500** referrals to be made for person-centred support



**2,000** vulnerable households to be contacted - direct support offered to **500** of these



communication channels to be improved to engage **every household** in Portsmouth

*"I believe that Switched On Portsmouth provides vitally important services for our city. In Portsmouth more than 11,000 households live in fuel poverty and some people can face choices in winter between food and heating.*

*The services provided, whether it is help accessing the best energy deal, tips on how to save energy in the home or a home visit to install energy saving equipment, enable residents to live healthier, warmer lives."*

**Tom Aplin, Advice Portsmouth**

# Funding and partnerships

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The majority of our services are funded externally from grant funding. We work with national and local partners such as AgilityEco and the Environment Centre to secure this funding; and work with funders and partners to secure new grants and funding as they arise.

Sources of funding include:

- The Energy Company Obligation
- Warm Homes Fund via Affordable Warmth Solutions working on behalf of the National Grid
- The Fuel Poverty Network Extension Scheme
- The Warm Home Discount Industry Initiative

Our free gas central heating scheme is funded via a £150m Warm Homes Fund, established by the national grid and administered by Community Interest Company, Affordable Warmth Solutions. This is designed to support local authorities to address some of the issues affecting fuel poor households.

We work with external and internal partners to promote our services, in order to support even the hardest to reach households.

Portsmouth City Council chairs a group of such organisations and teams to lead the direction of the fight against fuel poverty and to improve energy and water efficiency across Portsmouth, Gosport and Havant.



*"We are excited about this investment from National Grid and are delighted to support Portsmouth City Council to fund the scheme to address fuel poverty across the region. Solving the issues associated with Fuel Poverty continues to challenge many of our stakeholders and the feedback we've already received provides evidence of how the Warm Homes Fund will make a positive difference to thousands of homes throughout Great Britain."*

**Jeremy Nesbitt, Affordable Warmth Solutions**

# Thank you to all partners for your dedication and continued support.



**GOSPORT**  
Borough Council

*AgilityEco*



*tec*  
the Environment Centre (tEC)

To discuss the support and schemes available, or to request a hard copy of this report, please contact us via [energysaving@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:energysaving@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

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