

# SWITCHED ON

PORTSMOUTH

## IMPACT REPORT 2020 - 2021

[WWW.SWITCHEDONPORTSMOUTH.CO.UK](http://WWW.SWITCHEDONPORTSMOUTH.CO.UK)

















### Extra support provided

Many households faced challenges through the pandemic and continue to do so, including increased living costs due to spending more time at home and loss of income due to furlough and redundancies. In recognition of the immediate support required, the Switched On Portsmouth team brought forward pre-payment meter top-up voucher provision from autumn 2020 to spring 2021. This service ran from April 2020 to April 2021 providing nearly £58,000 worth of fuel vouchers to 733 households. To deliver these vouchers we partnered with local organisations, like Advice Portsmouth. Speaking about the partnership, Annette Groves, Advice Portsmouth Manager said: *"This was a great help especially to single-parent families who had to provide educational schooling to their children together with being on a low income."* PCC Housing Officers, like Allison Purcell, also

helped to provide the vouchers: *"I have used the top up vouchers for a number of my vulnerable tenants. They were in financial hardship due to the Covid pandemic and were struggling to afford the extra fuel costs due to being at home more. Every tenant I helped was extremely appreciative and said that it helped them cope with extra costs incurred by the lockdown."*

Additionally the Switched On Portsmouth team helped customers through the Covid Winter Grant funding scheme helping them access energy efficient white goods and other essential items for keeping fed and warm.

### Service adjustments

The in-person home energy visits were redesigned to be energy phone appointments and alternative methods of delivery. Installations are still able to go ahead in a Covid-safe manner.

*"Local authorities received Covid Winter Grant Scheme funding in December 2020, to help vulnerable households with essential costs including gas and electricity. SOP's partnership with The Environment Centre (tEC) enabled PCC to set up a simple referral mechanism for frontline agencies working with people in financial hardship, to provide gas and electricity meter top up vouchers. The variety of energy providers and top up systems means this can be complex and requires expertise, which tEC were able to provide in partnership with another charity, SCRATCH."*

**Mark Sage, Tackling Poverty  
Coordinator at PCC**

*"It has been reassuring to be able to refer customers to the Switched On Portsmouth service for energy support. Age UK Portsmouth has run a covid support programme and the schemes available through Switched On Portsmouth have been a lifeline to many. We hope to continue to work with the team and support each other's Service Users for years to come."*

**Samantha Massey, Services Manager,  
Age UK Portsmouth**

We continue to work in line with the council's Energy & Water at Home strategy, with upcoming milestones including:

### **Innovation**

In 2019/20 as part of a UK wide project the council piloted smart airbricks in 38 socially tenanted homes, which reduced the properties' heat loss by 12-16%, and gave average bill savings of £70-£90 per annum to tenants in gas-heated property; and £170-£220 in electrically heated properties. The council are now running a mid-floor smart air vent installation pilot in up to 100 council flats. With installs to be completed by September 2021, and energy monitoring running until March 2022.

### **Research**

Working towards a net zero carbon target will involve new and innovative approaches to energy efficiency and renewable energy. We work closely with the University of Southampton's Sustainable Energy Research Group to explore innovation, access funding and to review and validate the savings that are being made through existing schemes; which helps to shape future projects.

### **Resident engagement, Post Occupancy Evaluations and environmental monitoring**

The council is developing a strategy to address carbon emissions and energy consumption in its social housing portfolio.

This will be used in new-build and the retrofit of the Council's existing 15,000 home stock, to ensure they achieve a low-energy standard, such as Passivhaus, EnerPHit or similar.

In support of this, Switched On Portsmouth will extend its resident support to include tenant handover and educational sessions. Adapting resident behaviour, particularly within a multi-unit block, may require frequent visits over a number of years.

Resident support will work in tandem with ongoing post occupancy evaluations and environmental monitoring to provide meaningful quantitative and qualitative data.

### **Approved Installer Lists**

In addition to the solar approved installer list, 2021 will see the launch of lists for low-carbon heating and insulation. While these lists are important for Portsmouth residents, they can also assist in delivering funded schemes in the future, and help create jobs in the local supply chain.

### **MEES Service**

We are developing a Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards service to support private landlords to make the required improvements to their properties to stay compliant.

# 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 Agility Eco 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 (ECO)
- Warm Homes Fund (WHF) via Affordable Warmth Solutions (AWS) working on behalf of the National Grid
- Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LADs)
- The Fuel Poverty Network Extension Scheme (FPNES)
- The Warm Home Discount Industry Initiative (WHDII)
- Energy Redress Funding

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 partner 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.

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



*"The Environment Centre is pleased to be working in partnership with Portsmouth City Council's Switched on Portsmouth programme to provide additional help to residents in vulnerable and complex circumstances. Our energy advisors are able to provide ongoing support and expert advice to these residents, helping them navigate their way towards the outcomes they need. Switched on Portsmouth offers an excellent range of services, and we are proud to be providing the added value that ensures no one is left behind."*

**Helen Farley, Principal Project Manager, the Environment Centre**

