



Gosport Borough Council

A Housing Services Production

At Your Service

NEWSLETTER FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

Spring 2016 Edition

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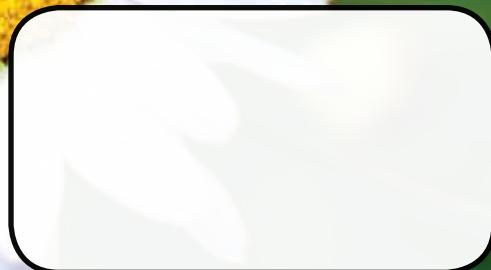
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Welcome
to the
Spring
issue...

Residents
Approved



GOSPORT
Borough Council

WHEN CONTACTING THE COUNCIL...

It is important to us that we connect you to the correct department or person when you contact us.

Please always remember to take a note of the department that you are dealing with or the name of the officer who has contacted or visited you.

Please find below some useful numbers for Housing Services:

Tenancy Management Team

If you are a Council tenant and need to speak to your Housing Officer or a member of the Tenancy Management Team, please call 023 9254 5655.

Income Recovery Team

If you need to speak to someone about your rent account please call 023 9254 5207.

Older Persons Services

If you live in Sheltered Accommodation or need to speak to someone about your 'lifeline pendant' please call 023 9254 5453.

Housing Options Team

If you are not a Council tenant and want to speak to someone because you are threatened with homelessness or need to find accommodation please call 023 9254 5476.

Temporary Accommodation

If you are not a Council tenant and are living in temporary accommodation allocated by the Council please call 023 9254 5586.

Lettings

If you are on the Housing Waiting List or have a query about the Choice Based Lettings scheme please call 023 9254 5682.



EASTER TOWN HALL CLOSURE

The Town Hall will close to the public at 5pm on Thursday 24th March and will re-open on Tuesday, 29th March, 2016 at 9am.

If you need to contact Gosport Borough Council in the event of an emergency during the holiday period please contact Kier on 0800 028 0835* who operate the 'Out of Hours' service for Gosport Borough Council.

* Calls from a BT landline will be free. Calls from other operators and mobile providers will be charged at their standard rates.



Patch 1 – Anglesey, Bridgemary South, Christchurch and Town-WLW estate

James Sibley: james.sibley@gosport.gov.uk
023 9254 5275

Patch 2 – Brockhurst, Forton and Leesland

Roz Weaver: roz.weaver@gosport.gov.uk
023 9254 5356

Patch 3 – Lee on the Solent and Town

Carol Garrett: carol.garrett@gosport.gov.uk
023 9254 5359

Patch 4 – Privett and Rowner & Holbrook

Rosie Swannack: rosie.swannack@gosport.gov.uk
023 9254 5356

Patch 5 – Bridgemary North, Elson and Peel Common

Syed Haque: syed.haque@gosport.gov.uk
023 9254 5273



YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

We actively encourage our residents to report any issues to us.

You can report a communal area repair to our repairs contractor Kier in the following ways by:

- Telephoning free phone number *0800 028 0835
- Reporting emergency repairs (including boilers) 'out of hours' on free phone *0800 028 0835
- Texting non urgent repairs on 07786 204386
- Emailing non urgent repairs to gosport.repairs@kier.co.uk
- Clicking on the Kier repairs app. This can be downloaded via Apple, Android or Blackberry stores; once you have downloaded the app register with passcode 1789.

You can report any grounds maintenance issue such as grass cutting and street cleansing to Streetscene by:

- Telephoning free phone number *08000 198 598
- Emailing streetscene@gosport.gov.uk

Any issues with debris on roads, pedestrian crossings, pot holes, street lamps and traffic lights can be reported to Hampshire County Council by:

- Logging onto www.hants.gov.uk/highways

Please see details of your Housing Officers and their patch on page 2.

**Calls from a BT landline will be free. Calls from other operators and mobile providers will be charged at their standard rates.*



CONTACTING THE POLICE

You should call 101 to report a crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

For example,

- Your car has been stolen.
- Your property has been damaged.
- You suspect drug use or dealing in your neighbourhood.
- To report a minor traffic collision.
- To give the Police information about crime in your area.
- To speak to the Police about a general enquiry.

You should always telephone 999 when it is an emergency.

For example,

- When a crime is happening.
- Someone that is suspected of a crime is nearby.
- When there is danger to life.
- When violence is being used or threatened.



If you are asked to make a claim for Universal Credit please contact the Income Recovery Team at the Town Hall on 023 9254 5207.

TENANCY AGREEMENT REVIEW

- UPDATE

The Council has carried out a review of the Secure Tenancy Agreement.

In December 2015, tenants were written to telling them about proposed changes to the agreement.

There was a good response with approximately 40% of secure tenants responding. The vast majority were in favour of the proposed changes and a number of suggestions were incorporated into the agreement.

At the time of going to press the new agreement is out for a final consultation.

The proposed changes to the secure tenancy agreement are:

Clause 2.5 (Change to Wording)

You must not inflict domestic abuse whether; assault, threats or violence or use mental, psychological, physical, emotional, financial or sexual abuse against your partner, ex-partner or any member of your family whether living with you or not.

Clause 3.1 (Amended)

You must live in the Property as your only and main home. You must not leave it unoccupied for long periods, if you plan to leave the Property unoccupied for a period of over **four weeks** at any one time you must inform us in advance and provide us with an emergency telephone number for you or your representative, and advise us when you intend to return to the Property. If you leave the Property unoccupied for a period in excess of **six weeks** and you have not previously informed us we may take action to end your Tenancy.

Clause 3.7 (Change to Wording)

If you wish to run a business from your home, you should apply in writing to us for permission. Permission will not normally be refused provided that business complies with Planning, and

Health and Safety Regulations and, in the Council's view, would not cause a nuisance to other residents. If you have not had our permission to run a business from the Property and find you are doing so, we may ask you to stop. We can withdraw our permission if we believe your business causes a nuisance and we will take legal action if necessary.

Clause 10.4 (New Clause)

You must not plant or allow to be planted any tree within **five metres** of the Property without our express permission. You must not in any event plant the following varieties of trees and shrubs;

- Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)
- False acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
- *Fallopia Japonica* (commonly called Japanese knotweed) and *Kerria japonica*
- Leyland cypress (*Cuprocyparis leylandii*)
- Poplars (*Populus spp.*)
- Sumach (*Rhus typhina*)

Clause 11.5 (New Clause)

You must not keep animals in the Property or any part of it for the purposes of breeding, commercial gain or any illegal purposes.

Clause 21.2 (New Clause)

Under no circumstances may you sublet the whole of the Property; to do so may be an offence under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 and you may be liable to prosecution. Your right to this tenancy and the below market rent payable by you is dependent on this and each time you pay your rent you are deemed to have complied with this clause.

Clause 21.3 (Change to Wording)

You must not carry out or commit any fraud related to the occupation of the Property. Examples of tenancy fraud include; subletting the whole of the Property whether for profit or not or not telling us the truth about your circumstances prior to us granting you a tenancy. As a result of committing tenancy fraud you will be at risk of losing your tenancy and may also be liable to prosecution.

Summary of Grounds for Possession (New Ground)

The Housing Act 1985 (Section 84A)

Section 84A: Absolute ground for possession for anti-social behaviour. You or a person you are responsible for under the tenancy agreement:

- Are convicted of a serious offence such as an offence involving violence or drugs that occurred at the property or in the locality of the property, or
- Are found by the Court to have breached a term of an Anti-Social Behaviour Civil Injunction or Criminal Behaviour Order or Community Protection Notice or Abatement Notice that occurred at the property or in the locality of the property.

Expanded Declaration

I/we have read this Tenancy Agreement and the rights and obligations contained within it and accept the Tenancy on the terms and conditions set out above.

I/we will let you know immediately of any change in circumstances which may affect the Tenancy.

I/we understand that the Council may make further checks to verify information given to secure this offer of a tenancy, and for the duration of the tenancy, as allowed by the law. If false or misleading information has been provided in order to gain this Tenancy I/we understand that this may mean that I/we may lose our home and/or be liable to prosecution.

Introductory and Flexible Tenancy Agreements will be updated to reflect the changes to the Secure Tenancy Agreement.

You will be sent an updated Tenancy Agreement to keep for your own records, you do not need to sign and return.

For more information please log onto www.gosport.gov.uk and follow the Tenancy Changes link.

The changes to the Secure Tenancy Agreement will be effective from 4th April 2016.



Housing Services Introductory Tenancy Agreement



Housing Services Flexible Tenancy Agreement



Housing Services Secure Tenancy Agreement

IMPROVEMENT WORK CONTINUES ALL OVER GOSPORT

We are pleased to provide you with an update on the improvements that are happening in your area.

Since the beginning of April 2015 up to the end of December we have:

- Installed 105 new kitchens
- Installed 92 new bathrooms
- Rewired 42 properties
- Installed new central heating to 115 properties
- Carried out 38 major disabled adaptations (consisting of 29 Level Showers, 3 over bath showers and 5 other major works)

Replacement roofs

Works have been completed to the first phase at Chester Court. We started with block 1-6 using workers directly employed by Kier. This test roof was monitored closely by the suppliers, Proteus. When the trial was completed, Proteus commented on the high quality finish and now are extremely pleased to have members of the Kier team as licensed installers of their product. So much so, that they have produced a case study reflecting this success to promote the work to other organisations.



The roof above 7-17 Chester Court that is being completed next!



The roof at 1-9 Mill Lane receiving its final coat of the Proteus system



The second phase (block 7-17) has been fitted with scaffolding and work started at the beginning of February. The third phase (block including 18-22) will then be carried out towards the end of March. There has been a minor delay on what was reported in the last AYS; due to the stormy weather we have experienced over recent weeks.

Roofs on both blocks of flats at Mill Lane are also being replaced by April. Block 1-9 has been completed with 18-27 recently fitted with scaffolding ready for work to start.



The roof on top of 1-6 Chester Court with its new flat roof complete with insulation

The Benefit cap was introduced in April 2013; the MAXIMUM amount of out-of-work benefits working-age families can receive is £500 per week, (£350 for single adults with no children). It is proposed the cap will reduce to £385 per week for families and £258 for single adults during 2016.

External over-cladding

Cladding works continue to be carried out across houses in the Borough improving their energy efficiency and making them cheaper to heat and lowering energy bills. Works to High Drive and Long Drive is complete with progress underway at The Links and The Fairway. The team will be moving towards the town to start works very soon at Alec Rose House and Slocum House.

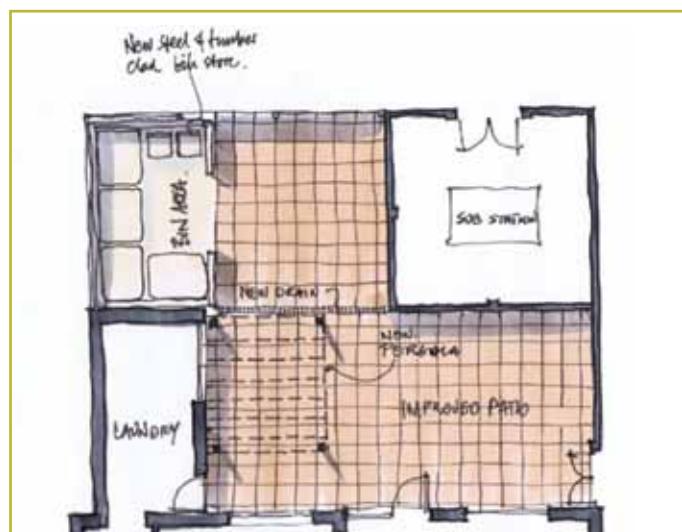
We will be completing Glebe Drive and Elmore Avenue by the end of April.



Cladding in progress replacing 'tile hanging' at the flats at The Links

Sheltered Scheme Upgrades

There has been a slight change to the planned programme for the upgrade to the sheltered schemes. Work has started at Alec Rose House and Slocum House and improvements to Gloucester House will follow shortly.



Possible layout for the garden space at the rear of Alec Rose

Upgrade to Hove Court

Formal consultation for the planned works has just been completed with leaseholders at the block. The majority decision for colour scheme for the block was light pastel blue/ cream combination.

We are now working hard finalising the specification and work programme. Window replacement work will start in April. We hope to fully complete all the works by the end of the summer.



Existing foyer at Alec Rose soon to be decorated



The end of Hove Court is subject to extreme weathering from its exposed location!



Elevation facing the High Street indicating Blue and Cream colours and style chosen by residents

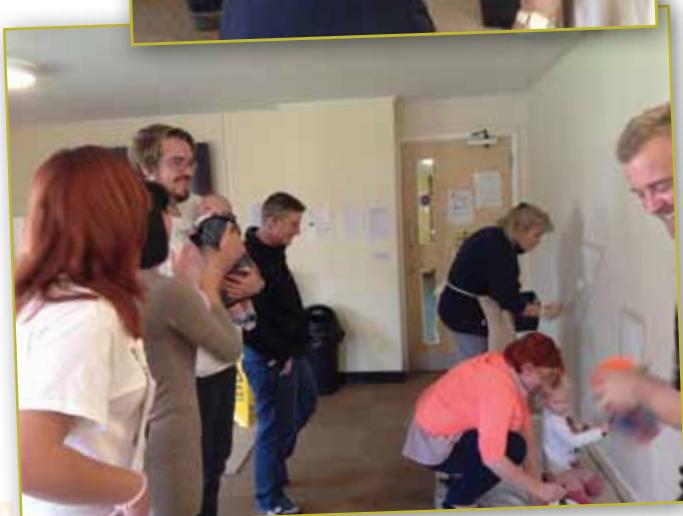
Most people receive much less of course - but if you have a large family or pay very high rent you could be getting less in 2016.

AGNEW FAMILY CENTRE SKILLS DAY

Novus, our painting contractor held a skills day at Agnew Family Centre, St Vincent Road last November before they started on the refurbishment programme. Operatives from Novus taught residents painting and decorating skills. One resident thought that he would never be good enough to paint but loved it and was one of the winners of the day for showing the most talent!

A coffee morning gathered opinions from residents to find out what they would like for their communal lounge. We wanted to revive this area to encourage full use of the lounge.

The residents were thrilled with the prizes they received for the painting and colouring competitions. One mum said that her little girl has had the best day she's had for a long time and loves her new 'Novus' bear. Staff from Novus said that it was very rewarding working with the residents and they were very happy seeing smiles on the childrens faces.



Many people are no longer entitled to full Housing Benefit. If you are under-occupying a property, a deduction will be made from your Housing Benefit of 14% for 1 bedroom, and 25% for 2 or more under-occupancy.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Whilst carrying out an estate inspection in the Bridgemary area, James Sibley, Housing Officer for Anglesey, Bridgemary South, Christchurch and Town-White Lion Walk Estate came across this stunning garden.

James said 'I have managed two different areas in the Borough covering around 1,300 properties whilst working at Gosport Borough Council and I can honestly say that this is the best front garden that I have come across. I really want to say well done to Mr and Mrs Arthur for keeping such a beautiful garden. It would be great if other people see this garden and take inspiration from it.'

If you don't have any garden tools, don't worry, use our Garden Tool Library. Please see below for more information about the scheme.



DO YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR GARDEN? WHY NOT USE OUR GARDEN TOOL LIBRARY

All Gosport Borough Council tenants may apply to borrow tools and equipment to maintain and improve their gardens for FREE.

There are no restrictions on the number of times that items can be borrowed.

If you wish to become a member of the tool library, please telephone 023 9254 5257 for an application form.

Tools will be delivered to you on a Thursday morning and collected the following Thursday morning.

The following is a list of garden tools that are available to borrow:

- 30 metre extension lead
- Garden fork
- Garden spade
- Garden rake
- Grass rake
- Dutch hoe
- Garden shears
- Wheelbarrow
- Long handled shears
- Electric mower
- Electric strimmer
- Electric cold pressure washer

Safety equipment will be issued with each item and guidance will be given on the safe usage.

If you want to borrow any equipment please ring 023 9254 5257 by 11am on Wednesday to guarantee next day delivery.



Please contact your Housing Officer on 023 9254 5665 if you would like information about moving to a smaller property

TENANTS FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

Traditionally these are items or components that have been left in a property when it is vacated by a tenant with the permission of a Gosport Borough Council (GBC) officer. Examples would be bathroom suite, kitchen, showers and other similar fixtures and fittings.

The Council accept responsibility for that item and that includes repairs. These would then be 'gifted' to the incoming tenant.

Our contractors will carry out repairs in the same manner that they would for any other reported repair.

Approved tenants own installations

We want to ensure a high level of customer service and guarantee that our properties are kept in good condition if a tenant has installed their own bathroom, over bath shower or kitchen. We will carry out repairs in the same manner as any other repairs call.

Warranty period

Self-completed improvements often include a manufacturer's or builders warranty period, generally one year. If repairs are within a year of fitting then it is reasonable for the tenant to approach the kitchen installer or manufacturer rather than Kier carry out the repair. Once this period is over, then the responsibility for repairs goes to the Council and Kier. Warranties can be limited in scope, it is therefore possible that the repair may not be covered by warranty. The Council would undertake repairs in such instances.

Permissions

Please check with the Council before starting any work.

Tenants are responsible for allowing access to The Housing Technical Team surveyors for them to sign off the works as part of the 'grant of permission' process.

You should remember that Kier may not always be able to replace an item they have fitted with an identical one such as kitchen unit door fronts or a matching wash-hand basin that you have put in.



DON'T USE YOUR DRAIN AS A BIN

We all use bins to dispose of any unwanted waste; however any liquid waste simply gets rinsed down the drain. Disposing of unwanted items is quick and easy to forget about; unfortunately it can cause environmental chaos and damage your pipes. We often don't realise the harm that we are doing by what we rinse down our kitchen sinks, bath and shower drains and flush down the toilet.

Every year there are hundreds of blockages in these pipes, caused by people flushing the wrong things down the toilet or pouring fats, oils and grease down the sink.

Your pipes are smaller than you think, about 10cm in diameter, so even a small blockage can cause raw sewage to flood your home or garden.

The cost of repairs and cleaning can add up to a large bill.

Southern Water is running a campaign between now and 2020 to visit homes in Gosport 'blockage hotspots' with advice on how to keep sewers and drains clear.

This is part of a wider campaign visiting approximately 20,000 homes in the region to share information about what to and what not to flush down the toilet or rinse down the sink or drain.



energyhelpline.com is an independent price comparison service which provides customers with fast, free and friendly advice on the best gas and electricity deals. Every month they help thousands of households to find better energy packages and pay lower bills.

They compare all major suppliers in the UK to help you find your best deal, and then take all the hassle out of switching with simple online forms and contacting your new supplier.

The website is really simple to use and includes help and information available on every page.

They will also be checking manholes and putting cameras in sewers to check they are working properly and using high-powered water jets to clear any blockages that are found.

Southern Water tell us that the items listed below should not be put down the drain:

- Fats including oils
- Wet wipes
- Tampons and applicators
- Sanitary towels
- Nappies
- Incontinence pads
- Cotton buds, bandages, plasters and dental floss
- Razors and blades
- Condoms
- Medicines
- Syringes and needles
- Chemicals
- Coffee grounds
- Egg shells
- Motor oil, transmission fluids, anti-freeze or other toxic chemicals
- Solvents, paints, nail polish or remover
- Corrosive substances
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications.



There is a dedicated team of advisors who can help with any queries on the freephone customer helpline 0800 074 0745 (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm and Sat-Sun 9am-5pm). They can even do the switch for you over the phone if you would like.

The gas and electricity price comparison service meets the requirements of the Confidence Code - a voluntary code of practice for household energy price comparison websites managed by Ofgem. It needs to be:

- impartial – not biased to any supplier
- comprehensive – compares all tariffs from all suppliers
- accurate and up-to-date

More information is available on the Ofgem website at www.ofgem.gov.uk.

HOUSING TENANCY AUDIT

Preventing and rooting out fraud is one of the Council's important goals. Fraud causes great harm to local communities, both financially and socially.

In 2015 Gosport Borough Council (GBC) carried out a tenancy audit. It looked at information held by GBC and Call Credit (a credit reference agency) to assess the risk of Council Housing fraud in the Borough.

The tenancy audit exercise involved matching names and addresses of GBC tenants to the names held on the Call Credit database to see if there was any discrepancy between the names of the adults living at the property. All GBC tenants were included in the data match.

Results showed that 98% of our tenants' details agreed to those held by Call Credit. This is good news as Councils expect to find concerns with up to 10% of tenancies when carrying out data matching exercises. This figure of 98% gives reassurance that GBC tenants living in our properties are who we think they are.

The Fraud Team carried out further investigations on the 2% to see if there was any obvious reason for the mismatch such as a recent mutual exchange. They found there were no cases of subletting or abandonment and no tenancy fraud issues.

Again this is good news, it does not rule out fraud completely but it is a good check.

It is reassuring to know that Gosport tenants have been given a clean bill of health and that tenancy fraud is a smaller problem here than might be in other places.

If you suspect fraud in your neighbourhood, please call our 24 hour confidential fraud hotline on 023 9254 5545 or email: fraud@gosport.gov.uk



SAFETY NOTICE – TUMBLE DRYERS



A potential concern with two types of tumble dryers manufactured between April 2004 and September 2015 has been identified. In some rare cases, excess fluff can come into contact with the heating element and prevent a risk of fire.

The affected brands are:

- Hotpoint
- Indesit
- Creda

Hotpoint will arrange a visit from an engineer, free of charge to modify your appliance. This will take approximately one hour to complete.

In the meantime if you have one of the affected dryers you may continue to use it as long as it is not left unattended whilst in use.

Whatever the make is of your dryer one lesson is to make sure that you regularly clean and maintain your appliance.

For more information, please log onto www.safety.hotpoint.eu and look at the 'self-service' model checker to see if your appliance is affected.



WORKING TO KEEP YOU SAFE

On **Saturday 19th March**, Gosport Community Safety Partnership (GCSP) will hold its fifth Safer Community Day at Gosport Town Hall.

Running from 11am to 2pm with a theme of ‘working with you for a Safer Gosport’ the event will offer a ‘one-stop shop’ of advice and information for the whole family. At the front of the Town Hall you can visit the Community Safety van, where advice on keeping you and your property safe will be available from your local Police Teams. Hampshire Police cadets will also be available to security mark your bike for free. Discounted cycle locks and free reflective items will also be available. The Driving Futures project will also be displaying their F24 Kit Car which local people have built themselves!

Representatives from; Gosport Borough Council, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Hampshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner, will again be joined by GAFIRS, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Air Ambulance and HM Coastguard Service. All have information on what they are doing to make Gosport a safer place for you to live, work and play. They will also provide advice on what you can do to help reduce the risk of crime and to protect your property.

Motiv8, Accommodation Resource Centre and Y Services for young people will also be in attendance providing information on activities in the Borough. There will also be advice for families from the School Nursing Team, HCC Safeguarding team and the Tooth Bus.

For details or a programme of the days activities visit: www.safergosport.co.uk or telephone 023 9254 5232.



FUR AND FEATHER (COMMUNITY ANIMAL EDUCATION CENTRE, OLD ROAD)

The Fur and Feather project aims to educate children and adults in the care of domestic pets such as cleaning, feeding, grooming and handling. It also aims to help those children from difficult backgrounds to engage in positive activities. It is known that animals can be very therapeutic, building confidence and a sense of wellbeing in the young.

The centre, which is based in Old Road, Gosport also provides an area where people can meet, interact with each other and just enjoy being with the animals.



The Centre Committee members are working with Gosport Borough Council together with the local Police and Health agencies.

Work is progressing well with aviaries, chicken runs and rabbit hutches in place. **The official opening of the Centre will be on Saturday 16th April 2016 between 11am to 2pm.** In the future, it is hoped to be able to make home visits to housebound people or to schools with some of the animals.



The Committee thanked the following for the grants and financial support they have been given and for their interest, support and help with this project:

- Kier
- Gosport Council
- Asda
- Covers Builder Merchants
- Days Build Base



For any further information about this project please contact Shirley Arbon on 07505 133296.



Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) - if you are struggling with Housing costs you may be entitled to some help in the form of a DHP payment.

Healthy Eating
FREE & FUN!

Want to try new foods?

Cooking on a Budget Sessions
at Seafield Community House
61 Old Road, Town area
Thursdays 4-6pm

"Eat what you make"
JUST TURN UP!!
or Call Rose on: 078 433 29 649

Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian

Gosport Wheatsheaf WITH Trust

Gosport Borough Council is committed to equal opportunities for all.

If you need this document in large print, on tape, CD, in Braille or in another language, please ask.

Published: March 2016

Gosport Borough Council, Town Hall, High Street, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 1EB
Tel: (023) 9258 4242

DO YOU NEED HELP LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING?

At Wheatsheaf Trust their advisers can help with:

- Job search, including accessing job search websites including Universal Job Match.
- Looking for training courses
- CV writing and advice
- Help with filling in applications
- Interview skills and techniques
- Understanding your skills
- Job matching to vacancies
- Careers advice
- Work Clubs - job search with support
- Personalised workshops



IT'S ALL FREE!

Give them a call to book an appointment or drop in to their centre to find out more at:

The Old Chapel, St George's Barrack, St George's Walk, Gosport, PO12 1FH
Telephone: 023 9252 8084 or email Jodie@wheatsheatr.org



Like us on Facebook: Wheatsheaf Trust Gosport

For directions and more information visit www.wheatsheatr.org

TIME TO TEST



You are at least four times more likely to die in a fire in your home if you have no working smoke alarm

Test your smoke alarms on the first of every month, then you know that they're working. Don't take risks with your family when a simple action is all that's needed. It's your life, take extra care of it.

In England over 200 people die each year in fires in their homes. These are often caused by smoking materials, cooking accidents, candles and faulty electrical wiring or appliances – especially heaters.

These simple steps can reduce the risk of fire and keep everyone safer:



Fit smoke alarms on every level of your home



Test them on the 1st of every month and never take out the batteries



Plan your escape route and make sure everyone knows it



Put cigarettes out – right out – and never smoke in bed



Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave cooking unattended



Make a bedtime check last thing at night to reduce fire risks – eg unplug heaters



Never try to tackle a fire yourself

**If a fire breaks out in your home
Get out, stay out and call 999**

www.gov.uk/firekills

