



WHITE HORSE
HOUSING

NEWSLETTER

October 2026

High quality housing handover in Poulshot

Board members and staff were blown away by the quality of four beautiful, sustainable homes which have been handed over to White Horse by builder Gaiger Homes at its Townsend Farmyard development in Poulshot.

See page 2 for the full story.



Pictured: Board Chair, David Trethewey, centre, with Operations Director, Belinda Eastland, left, Board members Michelle Thomas and Annette Foster and Housing Assistant, Ellie Grace with one of the new houses at Townsend Farmyard, Poulshot.

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Quality of new homes at Townsend Farmyard shines through



Four beautiful and sustainable homes (2 x rented and 2 x shared ownership) have been handed over to White Horse by builder Gaiger Homes at its Townsend Farmyard development in Poulshot.

White Horse Board members and staff were at the 14-home site, Gaiger's first estate development to tour the three-bed and two-bed homes for rental, and see the progress on the three-bed and two-bed for shared ownership that are now ready for their new occupants.

All of the EPC A-rated homes will be energy efficient, with air source heat pumps and PV arrays (solar panels) and electric vehicle charging points to help reduce bills. One of the most striking features is the enormous 2 by 6 metre sheds in the back garden, which have also been fitted with PV panels.

With spacious, light-filled kitchens and living rooms, wide stairways and airy bedrooms, the modern homes are bursting with character thanks to their red brick or Monocouche render and natural slate roofs.

Board Chair David Trethewey said he had been stunned by the quality of the homes as he wandered around them in the sunshine. "When Steve Warran our Chief Executive spoke to us about the development and the opportunity, and about his impression of Gaiger themselves, there was a sense that we could expect quality," he said. "But to be honest I am literally blown away by the beauty of this. It's such a fabulous space, it's so well designed and the amount of space that's offered for the families here is just incredible. If anybody had visited any of our recent schemes before and came here, they would just not be able to credit that this is a housing association property. The scheme is top quality, high end." He said the development is a testament to the ethos of the board to invest in quality homes. "There are no kind of corners cut just because this is affordable housing for people in need," he said.

"This is amazing, exceptional quality housing for people to live in".

"As a landlord, we would hope that we have far less work to do in terms of rectifying problems post-build and dealing with ongoing repair problems. And if those things are less of a problem for us, they're less of a problem then for the residents."

Gaiger Homes site manager, Andy Archer said he is proud of the high spec finishes of all of the homes on the site and said it was a conscious decision to ensure the private and housing association homes are indistinguishable. "Quality is what we're looking for, quality of the houses. We're using handmade clay brick, all the roof tiles are slate or clay and we're not using too many concrete products at all so we've really upped the game to get the quality of these houses."

Andy Archer and his team have been on site almost 18 months and are delighted to see the first occupants arrive. "The most pleasing thing for me is seeing all the finishing touches and seeing everyone here moving in. That's the goal for us, everybody moving in and being happy."



Pictured: The new homes at Townsend Farmyard, Poulshot (above). Board member and staff admiring the kitchen (below).



Mum is so excited to see her children enjoy their new home

After watching the gradual progress of her new home at Townsend Farmyard, Poulshot, new tenant Kelly Storton was pinching herself at the prospect of moving in with her three children.

She may have been moving just a mile along the road, but the three-bedroomed sustainable home is a world away from the cramped two-bed she left behind. For a start she can now have her own room with daughter Lili, 13, and two-year-old twins Luna and Lyra each having their own.

"It is amazing and it doesn't feel real after watching it go up" she said after collecting her keys from Housing Officer, Abby Cottle and being greeted by Board Chair David Trethewey.

"It's been crazy because Lili goes to school in Lavington and we drive past it twice a day, every day, so we've been just watching it as it has risen up," she said. "It has been exciting for a very long time."



Pictured: Kelly Storton with White Horse board Chair David Trethewey at the front door of her new home at Townsend Farmyard, Poulshot.

She hadn't been aware the Gaiger Homes development had any White Horse's involvement until a friend told her. "She lives on the corner and she told me to take a look at the signs that were posted outside the site," she said. "I contacted White Horse directly and went from there". "They contacted me back quite quickly and the process took a few months but it felt really quick."

She was at home with her children when the call came through to say she was successful. "The kids were kicking off and screaming so I couldn't hear properly and I had to say 'am I hearing you right?'. "I was absolutely chuffed and so pleased, I didn't think it was ever going to happen for us, never mind finding something so perfect, and everyone at White Horse has been so helpful."

She said it had been important for her to stay in Poulshot and be close to her parents in Devizes. "I've been in the village 11-and-a-half years, I've got a lot of friends here and I used to work at the nursery which hopefully one day I'll go back to," she said. "Everybody I love is here".

She is relishing having so much space for storage and watching her children settle in. "The twins are going to love it because there's a whole loop around the kitchen and living room they can run around," she said. "It's going to drive me crazy."



Pictured: Townsend Farmyard, Poulshot kitchen.



Pictured: Townsend Farmyard, Poulshot - large shed with fitted solar panels to roof.

Welcome to our two new staff members



Pictured: New Customer Service Advisor Karin Stevens

Busy Customer Service Advisor is head over heels with new role

New Customer Service Advisor Karin Stevens says she likes to keep busy - which is just as well because she spends all her free time either studying or hanging upside down from a ceiling.

She is studying part-time for a degree in Social Sciences with a specialism in Religious Studies at the Open University and also enjoys Aerial Hoop - a fitness activity combining strength, flexibility and acrobatics using suspended fabric loops.

Karin has plenty of experience dealing with the public after working most recently in HR and before that as Assistant Manager and then Branch Manager of a coffee shop.

She said she applied for the job at White Horse because she wanted a role where she could make a difference to people's lives in a more meaningful way.

"I was looking for something that was more tailored to me and my personality and that had a good impact," she said.

Her job has two main facets, she deals with queries on the phone or via email from tenants and also helps Asset Management Officer, Sarah Occleshaw with compliance - ensuring routine repairs and maintenance are correctly carried out and documented.

"I speak to tenants daily over the phone or send emails and I've met a few in person, which I really like," she said. "I really enjoy talking to people and going home feeling happy that I've made a connection with someone".

She is relishing working with the tight-knit team at White Horse. "It's a really nice team and really good to have that sort of camaraderie," she said. "Everyone is such a wealth of knowledge because they've been here so long."

Pictured: New Housing Assistant Ellie Grace

Keen rider gallops into new Housing Assistant role

New Housing Assistant and keen horsewoman Ellie Grace is enjoying getting out to meet tenants and seeing more of her home town.

The 24-year-old from Swindon admits that she is seeing areas of the town she has never been to, despite living there her whole life. "I'm seeing loads of new places so it's really nice," she said.

She joins after working in a similar role at Fairways Retirement Village in Chippenham and said she jumped at the opportunity to work as part of a smaller team. "What I liked about this job is that everyone knows everyone and they're constantly communicating," she said.

"I enjoyed the last job but I thought it was the right time to move because it is more flexible and I'm closer to home."

Her time has so far been occupied by supporting Operations Director Belinda Eastland with shared ownership tenants, helping Housing Assistant Tracy Crook with scheme visits and working with Asset Management Officer Sarah Occleshaw on grounds maintenance plans.

"It is just little bits of everything and I dip my hand in everywhere I can, which is great because it is so varied," she said. "Meeting the tenants has been so good because they've all been really lovely. It's really positive and refreshing and they've been very welcoming."

She said she is enjoying adding to her housing knowledge. "I like to constantly keep my brain busy and I'm learning loads," she said. "I've done my Level 3 housing qualification and I'm hoping to do my Level 4."

Each day is topped and tailed with caring for her new horse Honey, 16 who is at a yard in Wroughton. "I've always had ponies growing up and I love horses," said Ellie.

Garden haven is the best tonic for stroke survivor



Pictured: Julian and Sarah Crawshaw in their garden and some of the colourful plants that bring it to life in spring and summer

Sarah Crawshaw has always loved her garden, but after she had a stroke five years ago it became a lifeline and now it is her haven.

She and her husband Julian have created a stunning country cottage garden around their home in Baytree Close, Corsley Heath. Years of patient planting and pruning have resulted in a garden that is a riot of colour and is full of beautiful scents in the spring and summer.

Her stroke left her struggling with mobility and concentration but the garden gave her a place where she could express herself where as well as somewhere outdoors she can appreciate the nature she loves.

"After my stroke, there isn't much I can do, except gardening and painting, so this has really helped me," she said. "I'm so blessed that I have the garden, I don't get out a lot but I do really like being outside, so this is my healing."

Julian said Sarah's skill in knowing which seeds to plant and when to prune, combined with the wild nature of the garden, gives it its unspoiled, unplanned look. "It's not pristine, it's just full of natural

flowers and natural growth," he said. "Sarah works so hard and what she's produced is so nice. Every year it seems to fill out a little more and grow more beautiful, and this is the best year yet."

The garden has around four metres of wild grass meadow. "The birds and insects really like it, we have three or four birds nesting in our garden," said Sarah. "We have robins, dunnocks and blue tits and our bird box has a couple of sparrow chicks now."

"We get a lot of bees and butterflies because we have the plants that attract them, we both love nature so it is lovely to be able to sit out and appreciate it."

Her favourite flowers are foxgloves which, says Julian, have been in fine display this year. "They've been beautiful, pictures don't do them justice," he said. "We've also got our wedding rose in the front garden and year-on-year that is doing so well at the front. Sarah does the deadheading out there and it keeps flowering."

The garden is a contrast of sun at the front and shade at the back.

Sarah has been sourcing drought-tolerant plants to keep the front colourful. "You don't need to buy a lot of plants, you can just do it from seeds and once it's all established it kind of takes care of itself," she said.

"In the spring we put down organic compost and do some weeding and in the winter we have to prune a lot. But after that it's just half an hour a day, a bit of weeding and deadheading."

"I don't know what I'd do without the garden, I feel like it is my medicine. I always feel better out there."



Pictured: Julian and Sarah Crawshaw



Pictured: Artist impression of Garden Close, Sutton Benger

Steve Warran's column

Chief Executive, Steve Warran, reflects on all the latest at White Horse Housing Association.

I cannot start anywhere except Poulshot this month and talk about our new properties at Gaiger Homes' Townsend Farmyard development.

It was the company's first site under a Section 106 Agreement and we engaged with them really early, which meant we got the best possible outcome for our tenants. I am incredibly grateful for the way Gaiger have progressed the scheme and for being so generous in providing such high quality.

In many instances housing associations get little say in what is provided by developers, but that is not the case in Poulshot. We have four lovely homes with really nice finishing touches that make them indistinguishable from the other ten homes on the development.

Gaiger are an outstanding developer and have really given a lot of thought to the design and making life as comfortable and convenient as possible for the people who live in their homes.

I like working with smaller, more local developers because they really get what we are trying to do and they go the extra mile to ensure the houses they give us are top notch. I think that's something to be celebrated and I look forward to working with them again.

Hills Homes are another example of that and we have a development at Garden Close in Sutton Benger, where we will have five new rental homes and three shared ownership homes, entering its final straight.

As is often the case, there have been some minor issues with utilities that means the first phase of houses won't be ready until November, but that is fine. I went out to the site the other day and it is all looking really good. It's not the first time we've worked with Hills and they have provided us some fantastic homes before and are about to do so again.

In thinking about this column it struck me how quickly this year has flown by. I was talking to Phil Berry our Finance Director about his holiday in September and I reminded him it will be time to prepare our quarter two accounts when he returns. "Where has this year gone?!" we said.



Pictured: Steve Warran, Chief Executive at Hills Homes Garden Close development in Sutton Benger.



Pictured: Onsite at Hills Homes Garden Close development in Sutton Benger.

The last nine months have seen a great deal of planning and thinking about the next ten years for White Horse Housing.

One of my chief concerns, and that of our Board, is to 'future proof' the organisation against some of the things that might have potential to harm it, slow its growth or lessen the service it provides for our tenants. We have spoken about this recently at two very enjoyable residents' meetings in Wroughton and Kilmersdon.

Among those concerns are things like staff succession, maintaining our service culture when faced with increasing amounts of legislation and administration that take up vital staff time and the rising costs we face because of global factors, like the wars in Ukraine and Iran.

Over the last couple of months we've brought in a new Housing Assistant in Ellie Grace and a new Customer Service Advisor in Karin Stevens. Both have slotted into our team really well and are already making a difference.

The next piece in the jigsaw is our new Asset Management Director, Kindon Paddon, who joined us in September. He has huge experience working at a number of housing associations and local authorities and brings a wealth of knowledge of asset management, repairs and maintenance and improvements works.

He will be a tremendous asset to us and will marshal our resources to enable us to comply with these new regulations, continue to keep our homes the same high quality and make any energy efficiency improvements they need.

At the heart of all our decision making is developing and maintaining quality homes for our residents and I'm really pleased these three key appointments have added to our already excellent team to help get us to where we need to be.



Pictured: Steve Warran, Chief Executive at one of our Kilmersdon resident group meeting



Pictured: White Horse Housing - staff members



Pictured: (above) Kindon Paddon, Asset Management Director



Karin Stevens
Customer Service
Advisor

Ellie Grace
Housing Assistant

Repairs and Maintenance

Maintenance Manager, Darrel Smith gives us his regular update on what his repairs and maintenance team are up to.

How would you like to spend £1.25 million on home maintenance and improvements?

It sounds lovely but the catch is you have to spend it on more than 70 homes across Wiltshire and Somerset within a narrow time frame and not creep over budget.

Our annual programme of capital installations is well under way and so far, we've fitted 12 replacement kitchens and are about to begin work on 17 new bathrooms and new air source heat pump heating in 12 homes, we'll also be 'sprucing' up another dozen properties in September by installing new fascia and soffit boards, guttering, downpipes, porch ceilings and half gable ends.

Added to that we are also already working on replacement windows and doors to 14 homes and fitting PV panels to another 12.

To get all those 'ducks in a row' we have to order stock in plenty of time while negotiating on price and co-ordinate contractors to fit in with holidays, deliveries and a million other potential mishaps.

Not that I'm moaning, it's very satisfying to see all of this come together with the help of everyone in the team and our excellent fitters and craftsmen.

We are already planning the programme for March 2027 to April 2028 so the fun never ends.

And nor does me reminding you all to test your smoke alarms regularly, no matter what the weather is doing outside. In my 26-year career I have attended six fire damaged properties and each one has broken my heart.

Other priorities on my desk at the moment include preparing for the next phase of Awaab's Law in November. The law, introduced last year, puts the legal obligation on to landlords to deal with damp and mould.

The next phase will include excess cold and heat causing structural collapse, fire and electrical hazards, and domestic and personal hygiene and food safety. I am starting to piece the detail together, along with writing the policy and procedure. More to come on that next time.

We are also testing new software to oversee our stock condition surveys from October. These surveys monitor the condition of a home's main components, such as windows, doors, roofs, kitchens and bathrooms and is being driven by The Decent Home Standard.

Until recently, guidelines governing the replacement of the main components was according to their age – for example a kitchen had 20 years and a bathroom 25 years – but now the emphasis has changed to their condition rather than their age, so the onus is on us to carry out far more monitoring. Sarah and I will be carrying out these surveys, and we'll be in touch with some of you soon.



Pictured: Darrel Smith, Maintenance Manager



The residents' meetings are under way, and it's been great to meet you all, I would really like some input from you as to how we fill the agenda for next year's meetings.

If you have any ideas, please do let me know. As ever, you can reach me on **01380 850916, 07747 349211** or via email darrel.smith@whitehorsehousing.co.uk.

And finally, each year we carry out just shy of 700 services, to boilers, electrical safety checks, heat pumps, cylinders and so on, we've noticed over the last couple of years that a growing number of appointments don't go ahead because the contractor is unable to get access.

This not only increases the amount of admin we have to deal with but it also wastes money because these missed appointments still have to be paid for. Please do either make sure you are available or let our contractor 3 Solutions know as soon as you need to change the appointment.

Some of these servicing appointments are driven by legislation and best practice, for example we are capping more gas supplies than ever before, so we would appreciate your help with this. Recharges aren't something we want to introduce.

Anyway, enjoy the rest of what has been a marvellous summer so far. I'll be bracing myself for the usual unexpected distractions like riverbank collapses, drainage fractures, storm damage or structural movement to properties.

They usually come out of nowhere and are never inexpensive.



Financial support for residents facing hardship is changing

The government's new Crisis and Resilience Fund for people facing financial emergencies means a change to the way people can get support.

Operations Director, Belinda Eastland said: "Over the last three years we have been able to secure thousands of pounds of funding through the Household Support Fund provided by local authorities. It has helped us to help our residents with shopping vouchers, school uniform assistance, support during periods of cold or hot weather and many other essential items when they have been struggling.

"But the Household Support Fund has been replaced by the new Crisis and Resilience Fund, which is now administered directly by councils on behalf of central government. Unfortunately it means we won't be able to offer the same amount of support."

There is support available directly from councils for people struggling with:

- Loss of income or benefits
- Food shortages
- Essential appliance breakdowns
- Heating costs or utility bills
- Other emergency household expenses



Crisis and Resilience Fund continued -

To apply, please go to your local authority for help

Wiltshire Council
Bath & North East Somerset Council
Swindon Borough Council
Somerset Council (Administered by Citizens Advice Somerset)



Belinda added: "If anyone needs help with applying, or is unsure about whether they can apply, they should contact us on 01380 850916 or email info@whitehorsehousing.co.uk.

"We are still here to support our residents and, thanks to the support of our board, we do have a small Discretionary Support Fund available for people who may need one-off assistance. If anyone is suffering hardship, I would urge them to contact us to see if we can help."

Residents brave the heat to catch up with latest news at feedback

On one of the hottest evenings of the year, tenants packed into the White Hart at Wroughton to hear the latest news from White Horse Housing Association.

Operations Director, Belinda Eastland said the evening was a lively one, with plenty of debate. "It was a great evening," she said. "These meetings are important for our residents because they get to hear from us directly and can get their questions answered. It's also a chance to meet and chat to neighbours and our staff."

The meeting began on a positive note, with Operations Director Belinda Eastland presenting the results of the recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey, with 95 per cent satisfied with the overall service, 96 per cent feeling they live in a well maintained home and 99 per cent feeling they have a safe home.

She said in Wroughton all 16 respondents were either very or fairly satisfied across measures of overall service, home maintenance, safety and repairs.

In Minety, where there are ten newer homes and four older cottages, half of the respondents in the newer homes were very satisfied on all questions, with two fairly satisfied scores in relation to communal area management and being treated fairly and with respect.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel have reviewed all negative comments and identified actions and new Housing Assistant Ellie Grace will be contacting tenants to discuss concerns in more detail and outcomes will be reported back to the scrutiny panel.

Belinda explained the purposed of the new Social Tenants' Access to Information Requirements, known as STAIRS. She said from this October, housing associations will have to be open and transparent and make it easy for tenants to access a wide range of information.



Pictured: Wroughton Resident group meeting at The White Hart (above & below)



She said White Horse will publish information on its website, in tenancy packs or on the tenant portal about governance and decision making. This will include senior staff names and roles, organisational structure decision making processes and how complaints are prioritised. Tenant meeting minutes and agendas, spending information, including service charge use, housing stock plans, maintenance programmes, progress towards net zero and energy performance targets, and data on inspections and tenant satisfaction will also be made available.

She said from next April tenants can make written requests for more detailed information about social housing management. White Horse will have to respond within 30 calendar days and cannot charge for responses and must provide information in accessible formats.

Belinda said she is auditing current information and is now drafting a policy and procedure. Staff will then be trained and STAIRS will be publicised to tenants.

Maintenance Manager, Darrel Smith reported last year's responsive repairs and servicing figures, saying 3Solutions carried out 1,379 routine responsive repairs and 141 emergency repairs, totalling around 1,500 jobs. He reported 679 statutory services, such as gas, water, air source heat pump and ventilation servicing.

On a sweltering evening, he found time to talk about damp and mould, saying last year there had been 66 enquiries. He said each case typically involved up to three visits for cleaning, killing and treating mould, plus follow-up work on any building defects, resulting in costs of just under £75,000.

He explained how the White Horse triage system works, which involves staff asking standard questions and requesting photos, a review of the case history and a decision on whether a site visit or an appointment with 3Solutions is needed. He said because every interaction and decision is recorded, recurring problems are more easily identified and dealt with.

He discussed White Horse's planned works for this financial year, including replacing 12 kitchens, 17 bathrooms, heating in 12 properties, windows and doors in 14 properties, installing photovoltaic solar panels on 12 homes, and fitting new fascia boards, soffits, guttering and vented eaves to 12 properties.



As usual, there was a draw for £50 shopping vouchers, won by Shakira Hilton and Susan Middleton. "It was such a stifling evening so we really appreciated the number of people who came out from Wroughton and Minety to join us," said Belinda.



White Horse plans to spend about £1.25 million on maintenance this year, including planned and responsive works. Darrel and Asset Management Officer, Sarah Occleshaw will be carrying out stock condition surveys to check on roofs, windows, doors, structures, gardens and outbuildings.

'No robots' pledge at residents meeting



Residents contacting White Horse will never find their query being dealt with by a robot, that was a pledge made by Chief Executive, Steve Warran when he spoke at a tenants' meeting in Kilmersdon.

He was speaking at the annual residents' meeting in the village hall, which drew more than 25 people and covered a huge range of topics.

Steve was explaining that although staff are exploring the use of AI to make some admin processes quicker and smoother so they can use their time more effectively, the Board and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel are adamant that chatbots will never be used to reduce direct human contact with tenants. "Tenants will not reach a robot when calling the office," he said.

He said White Horse Housing is small compared with larger landlords but this allows a more personal one-to-one service and avoids tenants becoming just a number. While the organisation wants to continue to grow and develop new homes, he doesn't want it to reach a size where personal contact is lost.

Talking about White Horse's investment in repairs and maintenance, he said that in the last year it spent around £1.6 million on asset management, about half of its total turnover. Repair and investment costs in Kilmersdon were significantly higher than in other areas due to the age and type of properties,' he said.

He said that over the last two years more than £740,000 had been spent in Kilmersdon on bathrooms, heating, and new roofs at Ammerdown Terrace, with significant expenditure on solar photovoltaic panels and replacement windows.

The new double-glazed windows and doors in listed homes in Church Street have been particularly expensive, he said, which shows that White Horse is fulfilling its commitment to invest heavily in the village's homes, even when it needs higher than average spending.

Fielding a question about selling off older homes, he said it has always been policy that very old, uneconomic properties could be converted or disposed of when they become empty, if they are beyond viable repair and the money re-invested in updating existing homes or providing new homes for local people.

He said, unlike some other landlords, White Horse Housing will not evict tenants in order to sell homes. White Horse tries to reinvest sale receipts back into repairs and maintenance, particularly in the village. Receipts have also been used to fund new homes in nearby areas, such as the development in Horse Lane and other Somerset locations.

He said White Horse achieved a healthy surplus in 2025-26, which will provide funds for continued investment. "We are financially strong and remain ambitious both in service standards and in building new homes," he said.



Pictured: Ammerdown Terrace - new roofs, replacement windows and Solar photovoltaic panels



Responding to queries about contractors being called out multiple times for the same roof problem, Maintenance Manager, Darrel Smith said repeat visits are monitored and are not paid for twice if no new work is done.

He is also working with contractors to ensure as many correct parts are carried on their vans as possible to avoid having to make a return visit.

Operations Director, Belinda Eastland discussed the positive Tenant Satisfaction Survey and revealed that tenant arrears across the association at the end of June stood at just 0.54 per cent of turnover, one of the lowest rates in the country.

She spoke about new regulatory requirements around transparency and access to information. From October, White Horse will have to comply with Social Tenants Access to Information Requirements (STAIRS). She said it already provides information on its website and portal, but will need to add extra web pages covering additional information about governance, decision making, spending, stock management, performance, services, service charges and other areas of interest.

From next April staff will have to respond to any tenant request for information within 30 days. There will be a section on the website to submit requests but tenants could also phone or email. Among the topics tenants might ask about are allocations, rent collection, rent levels, occupancy rights, estate management, communal maintenance, property conditions, repairs, antisocial behaviour, staffing, training, board meetings and scrutiny panel meetings.

As usual, there were two prize draws for people attending, with Nicola Young winning a £50 John Lewis voucher and Andrew Fry taking home a £50 Amazon voucher.



Pictured: Kilmersdon Resident Group Meeting



“Overall it was a really good meeting,” said Belinda. “We had a very good turnout and some really good discussions, which shows how important it is for us to be out there and meeting our residents.”





Residents given top tips to stay safe online

Cyber security specialists Simon Goodwin and Simon Partington gave residents practical advice on staying safe online at a feedback meeting in Wroughton.

The pair are from CyberBeat, a police-led education programme run by the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit. Its specialists work with schools, communities and organisations across the South West is to help people stay safe online and prevent cybercrime before it happens.

They told the meeting that cybercrime is now one of the most common types of crime in the UK. Criminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated and often pretend to be organisations we all know and trust, including banks, the police, housing associations, delivery companies and even the NHS.

They said it doesn't need a computer expert to protect people online, a few simple habits can make a big difference.

Create stronger passwords

Your passwords are one of the first lines of defence against online criminals.

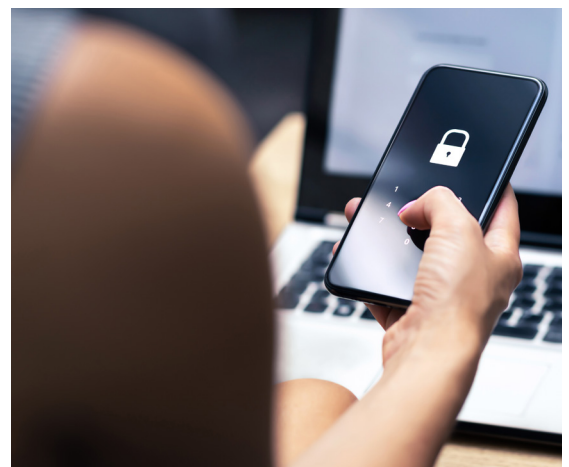
Choose a different password for every account, especially for important services such as your email and online banking. Experts recommend using a passphrase made up of three random words, as these are much harder to guess than short passwords or words linked to your personal life.

Avoid using birthdays, names of family members or pets, or other information that someone might find on social media.

If you struggle to remember lots of passwords, don't worry. The password managers built into most smartphones and internet browsers can create and safely store strong passwords for you.



Pictured: Cyber security specialists, Simon Goodwin and Simon Partington with resident Gina Hanson



Your email account is particularly important because it often contains personal information and can be used to reset passwords for many of your other accounts. Keeping it secure should be a top priority.

Scammers may ask you to confirm your email address in order to obtain it. Beware of giving it away.

Learn to spot a scam

Many scams start with an unexpected email, text message or phone call. The message might claim there's a problem with your bank account, a parcel waiting for delivery, an unpaid parking fine or an urgent bill that needs paying straight away.

Scammers want you to panic and act quickly without stopping to think. Be suspicious if a message:

- Asks you to act urgently
- Tells you to click a link or scan a QR code
- Asks for passwords, personal details or bank information
- Threatens extra charges or says an account will be closed
- Promises a bargain or investment that seems too good to be true.

If you're ever unsure, don't click the link. Instead, contact the organisation directly using a telephone number or website you already know is genuine.

Keep your money safe

One of the most convincing scams involves criminals pretending to be from your bank or the police.

They may tell you that your money is at risk and ask you to move it into a "safe account".

Remember this simple rule: your bank or the police will never ask you to transfer money to keep it safe.

Another common trick is sending fake invoices or emails claiming a company has changed its bank details. Before making any payment, always contact the company using trusted contact details to check the request is genuine.

Take your time

Scammers rely on creating a sense of urgency.

If something doesn't feel right, stop. Take a few minutes to think about it, talk to a family member or friend, or contact the organisation directly before taking any action.

It's always better to double-check than to rush into a decision.

If you think you've been scammed

If you have shared your bank details or transferred money, contact your bank immediately. The sooner you report it, the better the chance of stopping the payment or recovering your money.

You can also help protect other people by reporting suspicious messages: Forward suspicious text messages to 7726 (which spells SPAM) free of charge.

Forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk.

Report fraud or cybercrime to Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud and cybercrime reporting service, online at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.





Scheme visits 2026

30/4/26	Pewsey, Milton Lilbourne, Burbage, Collingbourne Ducis
14/5/26	Mildenhall, Chilton Foliat, Marlborough, Ogbourne St George
28/5/26	Burton, Castle Combe, Luckington
3/6/26	Great Somerford, Sutton Benger, Kington Langley
18/6/26	Kilmersdon, Terry Hill, Faulkland
30/6/26	Urchfont, Rushall, North Newnton
9/7/26	Peasedown, Writhington, Coleford, Bruton
22/7/26	Bishopsdown, South Marston, Hannington, Wanborough
31/7/26	The Comptons, Winterbourne Monkton, Wroughton
13/8/26	Ashton Keynes, Leigh, Minety, Hullavington
27/8/26	Kilminster, Corsley, Dilton Marsh
3/9/26	Colerne, Box
17/9/26	Redlynch, Whiteparish, Winterslow
8/10/26	Heddington, Rowde, Bromham
22/10/26	North Bradley, Southwick, Semington, Staverton, Hilperton



WHITE HORSE
HOUSING

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