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Support for households with higher energy and food costs; Ofsted inspectors find improving services that safeguard children; Increase in fees and allowances for foster carers; Key infrastructure to Plymouth and South Devon Airport.

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Additional funds to support households struggling with higher energy and food costs

We've received confirmation from the Department for Work and Pensions, (DWP), that we'll be allocated a little over £5 million in the latest round of Household Support Funding.

The funding is to support households that are struggling to pay higher bills for energy, food, water and other essential items.

Specifically, it's to help households in need that may not be eligible for other support that is already available from the government.

The announcement comes as Citizen's Advice is reporting that average energy costs are as high as last winter for many households, and that despite energy prices falling this month, [around 5.3 million people are currently living in households in debt to their energy supplier.](#)

We have to submit plans by mid-May to the DWP setting out how we, with our District, City and Borough Council colleagues and other voluntary and community partners, will make the latest funding available to households.

Read more about what we expect those plans to include



Ofsted inspectors find improving services that safeguard children, but there's more work to do

Our 'children's front door', which is the name for what was previously known as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or MASH, has been described by Ofsted inspectors as now being 'more effective' since their last monitoring visit, and its leadership as 'having a plan and additional capacity to deliver changes.'

In this visit, inspectors looked at areas of concern identified last time within the 'children's front door' service, and at how risk or harm to a child is assessed.

They found that a good deal has improved, but that there are still things we need

to do to strengthen the services further.

You can [read more about what inspectors said about the services in the full story on our news page.](#)



Increase in fees and allowances for Devon County Council's foster carers

This week, Councillors voted to raise the allowances and fees paid to our foster carers.

Like many local authorities, we are seeing a high number of children in care, but too few people wanting to become foster carers.

Councillors on Wednesday (10 April) agreed to raise foster carers' allowances in line with the Department for Education's (DfE's) National Minimum Rates, as well as fee payments.

Allowances are paid to help cover the cost of caring for a child, and fee payments are made on top of allowances to recognise a foster carer's skill and experience.

The decision means that the amount that we pay our foster carers is more competitive, making it more financially viable for people to consider fostering directly with us.

Attracting a wider pool of potential carers will give us more opportunity to match children's needs with the most suitable foster families, leading to more stable, long-lasting placements.

The increase also reflects the rising costs of living and aims to ensure that our foster carers are well supported with the resources they need to provide the exceptional levels of care expected.

"We want to increase our number of foster carers and are working hard to increase the support that they receive to do this essential work with our children and young people," said Councillor Leadbetter, Cabinet Member for children's services.

[Read the full story on our news page.](#)



Approval given to deliver key infrastructure to Plymouth and South Devon Freeport site

Councillors have given the go ahead to improve links to a new employment development at Langage, a key part of the Plymouth and South Devon (PASD) Freeport.

They approved the delivery of a two-phase spine road, which extends the existing Kingsway road, and a multi-use bridge across the A38 Deep Lane Junction, which will connect the new community of Sherford to the growing development.

PASD Freeport is one of twelve designated by government and is a partnership between, Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council, Devon County Council, and the private sector.

It aims to create over 3,500 jobs, predominantly across key engineering and manufacturing sectors, and will play a crucial role in Devon's economic recovery and growth.

Currently, the Kingsway road stops just south of the Langage Power Station on the eastern side of the Langage Business Park.

Phase one will focus on extending the road so that it serves the Langage customs and tax site.

Phase two will be a continuation of the first phase with a planning application expected to be submitted in September 2024. The delivery of this section of the spine road will align with the future delivery of the employment development, expected to be in 2027.

You can [read more in the news story on our website](#).



Make sure you're registered to vote

Local elections will take place in some areas of Devon on Thursday 2 May, so [make sure you're registered by Tuesday 16 April](#) and that you've got the right photo identification if you plan to vote in person.

If you don't have any eligible form of ID, you can [apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate](#) before Wednesday 24 April.

Voters across the county will go to the polls to choose a new Police and Crime Commissioner. Residents in [Exeter](#) and [Plymouth](#) will also be asked to elect some new councillors as part of the cycle which sees a third of seats contested each year for three years, with no election in the fourth year.





Emergency works to repair a small hole in Gunnislake Newbridge will run into a third day

Divers, investigating damage to one of the piers of Gunnislake Newbridge this week, found more submerged trees than they had expected, extending the emergency repairs by a further day.

The bridge was temporarily closed on Wednesday, and was due to open again on Thursday afternoon.

The emergency works are to repair a small hole found in one of the piers. Initial inspections haven't raised any immediate structural concerns with the Grade One listed bridge, but it's essential that action is taken as soon as possible to fill the hole in order to protect the structure.

Work will be continuing today, (Friday), with the bridge closed between 9:30am and 3:30pm. A diversion is in place during the temporary closure.

You can [read the full story on our news page](#).



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