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Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Ryan Murphy, Communities Minister Gordon Lyons and Mary Armstrong, Chair of Holywood Arches Business Association were among those lauding the success of the Holywood Arches area recently.

HOLYWOOD ARCHES REVEALS A VIBRANT PLACE TO SHOP, EXPLORE, AND RELAX

Hollywood Arches Business Association has revealed a destination brand to help promote Belfast's Holywood Arches as a vibrant hub to shop, explore and relax as part of Belfast City Council's "Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations" initiative, funded through the Department for Communities Revitalisation programme.

With assets including CS Lewis Square, Connswater Community Greenway, Glider / Belfast Rapid Transit and Belfast Bikes, Hollywood Arches continues to be a gateway to east Belfast, providing an attractive hub for the community and visitors. The wide variety of businesses, combined with the uniqueness of this place. To celebrate Hollywood Arches, a series of events and activities recently took place.

Continued on page 4

Ambitious targets for Belfast!

These include 150,000 new trees, 6,000 new homes and 7,000 new business start-ups by 2028

Plans to support the most vulnerable in Belfast while growing the economy, regenerating neighbourhoods and achieving climate targets have been published in a refreshed strategic plan for the city. The Belfast Agenda was first published in 2017, setting out a joint vision for the city up to 2035. With significant economic, social and environmental changes in recent years, it has been reviewed and updated to reflect current priorities. City partners have agreed to deliver a significant programme of actions by 2028 which will include building 6,000 new homes, planting 150,000 trees, reducing chronic homelessness, increasing the number of business start-ups by 20 percent and reducing the economic inactivity rate by five percent each year. Statutory and community partners involved in co-designing the Belfast Agenda include Belfast City Council, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Education Authority, Invest NI, Libraries NI, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Public Health Agency, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Sport NI, Tourism NI, Belfast Area Partnership Boards and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectoral Advisory Panel. For more information visit www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastagenda

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Leading local charity receives £100,000 for Therapeutic Services

Action Cancer is delighted to announce that following a grant application, it has received £100,000 from Walk the Walk, best known as organisers of the iconic MoonWalk London.

This funding will support Action Cancer's Therapeutic Services which are on offer to people affected by cancer throughout Northern Ireland. Action Cancer's Therapeutic Services can help deal with the physical and emotional impacts of cancer, for example, pain, restrictions, fatigue, sleeplessness, anxiety and fear. Action Cancer offers Counselling, Complementary Therapies, Life Coaching, Peer Mentoring, Scar Therapy and Yoga/Pilates to those in need.

The funding will also enable Action Cancer to proceed with the development of an Integrative Cancer Care Pathway model, including the development of relevant programmes and associated IT infrastructure aimed at establishing Action Cancer as the Northern Ireland Integrative Cancer Care Centre.

The grant provides additional time to identify and obtain other sources of funding to secure the sustainability of the services beyond 2025 while providing the charity with the opportunity to leverage match funding from alternative sources.

The funding also has the added benefit of enabling Action Cancer to retain



L-R Nina Barough CBE, Founder and Chief Executive of breast cancer charity Walk the Walk is pictured with Action Cancer Ambassador Carol Withers and Action Cancer Complementary Therapist Alicia Ferguson to celebrate a grant of £100,000 towards the charity's Therapeutic Services.

highly skilled and qualified practitioners in their respective areas of expertise with a range of specialist cancer related qualifications.

Nina Barough CBE, Founder and Chief Executive of breast cancer charity Walk the Walk, said:

"I am delighted to share that Walk the Walk have awarded a grant to Action Cancer. This will fund 1,000 sessions of therapeutic support to around 215 people diagnosed with cancer. I know from my own experience how frightening and isolating a cancer diagnosis can be, so the service which Action Cancer provide to help support cancer patients through an

incredibly difficult time, really is life-changing.

"Three years ago, we were thrilled to be the principal funder of Action Cancer's new Big Bus, which does such vital work across Northern Ireland, providing health checks and breast screenings for women outside of the NHS screening range, 40-49 and over the age of 70. It is really exciting that by working together again, our charities are continuing to make such a huge difference.

"Grants, like this one to Action Cancer, are also amazing news for Walk the Walk's wonderful fundraisers.

I cannot thank these fantastic people enough! Sign up now at walkthewalk.org for our flagship overnight fundraising challenge The MoonWalk London on Saturday 18 May. It's an incredible, fun-filled fiesta of a night, bringing many people together, putting one foot in front of the other and achieving a personal goal, whilst helping others. Come and see for yourself; it really is breath-taking!"

To find out more about Action Cancer's Therapeutic Services which are on offer to people affected by any type of cancer, please visit www.actioncancer.org or call 028 9080 3344.



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21 UNDER 21 ENTREPRENEURS TO WATCH

21 current and future Belfast entrepreneurs gathered at the finale of the 21 Under 21 Entrepreneurs to Watch initiative at Danske Bank recently.

Designed to unearth, recognise, and fast-track 21 exceptional potential young entrepreneurs in the city, the Belfast City Council initiative offered a three-month programme of action-oriented workshops, acting as a springboard for future success for the successful participants.

The young entrepreneurs learned, in-person, from world-leading businesspeople including Alice Thompson (Co-Founder of Social Bite and The Big Sleepout), Greg Bradley (Founder of BLK BOX), Maebh

Reynolds (Co-Founder of Go-Pluggable) and Alan Mahon (Founder of Brewgooder, the UK's fastest growing beer brand).

Leading brands DWF Law, Danske Bank and Pacem Accounting & Tax who supported the initiative supplemented guest speakers' experiences with practical guidance on starting and growing a business.

During the finale, the participants had the opportunity to pitch for a £2,000 cash boost. After a host of strong presentations, the judges voted for Brogan Brady

and her company Instyl as the overall winner.

Speaking at the finale event, Lord Mayor of Belfast Councillor Ryan Murphy said: "I've chosen to champion our city's young people during my year in office, and we've also made a commitment to support Belfast's young people to fulfil their potential in our community plan, The Belfast Agenda. 21 Under 21 Entrepreneurs to Watch is all about nurturing Belfast's young people's entrepreneurial talent, because they're so fundamental to our



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city's future success and growth. "We're not seeing enough young people starting businesses in Belfast yet – and that's despite their obvious talent and ambition. We want to show that enterprise is a viable career option for everyone, regardless of age, or educational

achievement. And while starting a business may be daunting, our council enterprise and business growth team and our wider business networks are there to support you every step of the way. "The young entrepreneurs who have engaged in this initiative are exceptional and I want

to take this opportunity to congratulate Brogan Brady of Instyl and her peers and wish them every success on their entrepreneurial journey." 21 Under 21 winner 2024 Brogan Brady said: "I'm absolutely delighted to win the £2,000 prize which will help accelerate the

launch of my business, Instyl. The 21 Under 21 programme is a fantastic way to learn key business skills, build a network and make new friends. I'd really recommend anyone who has an idea or an early-stage business to consider applying and taking part in the future."

Continued from page 1

Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Ryan Murphy, commented: "It's fantastic to see the retailers and businesses at Hollywood Arches being supported and profiled. Our Belfast Agenda commits to growing a diverse, inclusive economy, and the Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations pilot scheme is all about

promoting economic growth throughout Belfast, by focusing on enhancing infrastructure, marketing, and animation along the city's arterial routes. "This important investment from the Department for Communities is helping to strengthen Belfast's competitiveness by supporting start-ups, independent retailers, social enterprises, and cultural

and voluntary organisations to attract greater footfall and spend – and in this case, it's also supporting local community tourism. I wish the Hollywood Arches Business Association every success and look forward to seeing people of all ages and backgrounds enjoying their springtime events." Communities Minister Gordon Lyons said: "My Department is committed to the regeneration of cities and towns across Northern Ireland through initiatives which promote urban renewal and development of public spaces. We do this in collaboration with a range of partners and stakeholders, and in conjunction with the local community. I am delighted to hear my department's funding of the Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations programme has enabled yet another local traders' association to drive forward the regeneration and economic competitiveness of their area. I wish the

Hollywood Arches Business Association and the local community the very best for the upcoming events." Mary Armstrong, Chair of Hollywood Arches Business Association added: "We are very grateful to Belfast City Council and Department for Communities for their support, as this will help us to support our local traders by providing a Hollywood Arches brand promoting the place as a vibrant, connected hub, which encourages the community and visitors to shop, explore and relax, as well as continue to position the place as a gateway to east Belfast. "As part of our destination brand launch, our series of events and activities will form part of our ongoing plans to stimulate economic activity and increase footfall and sales." For more information on Belfast City Council's support for business, go to www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cityforbusiness

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Can you give your Sunday morning to Air Ambulance NI, Sunday 5th May at Moy Park Belfast City Marathon?

The 2024 Moy Park Belfast City Marathon, Sunday 5th May is just 5 weeks away and charity Air Ambulance NI aspires to have at least 100 people around the marathon route to cheer on the participants.

Grace Williams, Area Fundraising Manager for the charity said, "We are asking people who live in Belfast and surrounding areas to consider giving the gift of your time, by volunteering to help at one of Air Ambulance NI's seven water and cheer stations along the marathon route: Stormont Estate (start line), Ormeau Park, Boucher Road, Northumberland Street, Antrim Road, The Big Fish (city centre) and the finish line. Our supporters will be with a group of other cheerers, so this is a chance to meet new people and play your part in helping to save lives. As the marathon event is now sold out, volunteering is a great way to get involved in the biggest marathon event the city has hosted in 42 years. Volunteers don't need previous experience and we will provide everyone with charity branding, refreshments and cheer materials including noise makers and pom poms. You'll need a strong voice to cheer and a sense of fun and positivity! If you can gift your morning on Sunday 5th May and you would like to join us at one of our cheer or water stations, please email belfastmarathon@airambulancenl.org".



Air Ambulance NI is a local charity that works in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to provide the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS). This service brings emergency medical interventions direct to seriously ill or injured people with the aim of saving lives, brains and limbs. When life hangs in the balance, every second counts and the

air ambulance can reach anywhere in Northern Ireland in twenty-five minutes. The crew is made up of a doctor, paramedic and pilot and on average they are called out twice per day. The service operates seven days a week for twelve hours per day. On scene, the team deliver specialist interventions to patients that can mean the difference between life and death. These interventions can include advanced pain

relief, a pre-hospital blood transfusion and a pre-hospital anaesthetic. Since its inception in July 2017, HEMS has been called out over 4,000 times. Air Ambulance NI aspires to raise £2.5 million each year to maintain and sustain this service. For further information please contact Air Ambulance NI by calling the charity on 028 9262 2677 or emailing belfastmarathon@airambulancenl.org



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Schoolgirls from across Northern Ireland successfully delivered a large-scale event at ICC Belfast recently as part of the SistersIN programme.

It was attended by First Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly, underscoring the importance of the shaping the future of young women across the region. Attended by over 1,000 people, Romy Maguire, a pupil at Glenlola Collegiate, was amongst almost 400 sixth-form schoolgirls from 28 schools across Northern Ireland who took part

in this year's SistersIN programme. Dedicated to enabling, empowering, and developing young girls across Northern Ireland, the leadership programme is a collaborative ecosystem between the schools who deliver leadership training, the senior female leaders who mentor the pupils, and the pupils who put their leadership into action through projects in their schools, local communities, and often, wider society.

In addition to successfully delivering the celebration event, the schoolgirls secured Gill Tierney, Consultant Surgeon and President of the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland (ASGBI), as a keynote speaker. She said, "It's been such an honour attending this year's SistersIN event and having the chance to speak to such a diverse range of talented young women across Northern Ireland. Engaging with

these future leaders was a real source of inspiration and I have no doubt that they will go on to achieve great things."

SistersIN originated as a pilot in 2019, under the leadership of Assumption Grammar School's principal, Peter Dobbin. This year the, programme and the event have grown in stature, signalling the ongoing demand for professional development opportunities for young women, but also a willingness from the local business community to support female leaders of tomorrow.

The schoolgirls also secured exhibitor support from almost 40 businesses, and hosted panel discussions with female leaders from Danske Bank, Education Authority, Gilbert Ash, Queen's University Belfast, KPMG, Concentrix and ICC Belfast. The local business community's support has been evident throughout this year's programme



Pictured at the Celebration Event at ICC Belfast are Julia Corkey, Chief Executive at ICC Belfast, Zara Flanagan, student at Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry, Maka Chinanayi, student at Hazelwood Integrated College, Romy Maguire, student at Glenlola Collegiate and Aisling Press, Chair of SistersIN and MD of Personal Banking at Danske Bank

with participants receiving mentorship from business leaders at various local firms. Amongst the schools taking part were Glenlola Collegiate (Bangor), Our Lady's Grammar School (Newry), Hazelwood Integrated College (North Belfast) and St. Cecilia's College (Derry-Londonderry). Visit sisters-in.org for more information.

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East Belfast second best area for broadband

West Belfast has been named the Northern Ireland area with the best broadband, according to a new study.

The experts at Getac - Rugged Computing Solutions analysed data from Ofcom Connected Nations 2023 to reveal the spots with the best broadband. Each UK parliamentary constituency was ranked based on four metrics: average download speed, superfast availability, percentage of premises receiving under 10 Mbps, and the percentage of premises receiving over 30 Mbps. The areas were each given a score out of 40 and ranked accordingly. Belfast West topped the study as the Northern Ireland parliamentary

constituency with the best broadband. Approximately 99.3% of premises in the constituency have superfast availability, one of the highest percentages in the entire region. The area's average download speed of 223.2 Mbps was higher than any other spot in Northern Ireland, propelling it to the very summit of the ranking.

East Belfast took second place on the ranking. The area placed high thanks to its impressive average download speed of 222.4 Mbps and low percentage of premises

receiving speeds of under 10 Mbps, below Ofcom's threshold for 'decent broadband'.

People living in North Belfast have access to the third-best broadband in Northern Ireland. Residents can enjoy average download speeds of 217.7 Mbps, while 92.78% of premises in the area receive superfast speeds over 30 Mbps.

South Belfast is the worst place for broadband in the city but still ranks above every other area in Northern Ireland. Locals have access to the fourth-best broadband in Northern

Ireland, with the average download speed reaching 214.2 Mbps and 91.77% of premises taking advantage of superfast speeds over 30 Mbps.

North Down is the best area for broadband in Northern Ireland outside of Belfast. Residents of this constituency have the greatest access to superfast broadband in Northern Ireland, with 99.8%. The uptake of superfast broadband, speeds over 30 Mbps, is also common in the area, with 92.46% of all homes and businesses receiving over 30 Mbps.

Foyle is the sixth-best constituency for broadband across Northern Ireland. Exactly 98.3% of premises have access to superfast availability,

meaning they are capable of receiving download speeds of at least 30 Mbps. The average download speed for homes and businesses in the region also reached 197 Mbps.

East Antrim ranks seventh among the best spots in Northern Ireland for broadband. Approximately 97.4% of premises have access to superfast broadband, while the average download speed for the area is 188.6 Mbps.

Lagan Valley, Upper Bann and Strangford claimed eighth, ninth and tenth spot among the top 10 areas with the best broadband. The average download speed found in these areas was 186.5 Mbps, 173.7 Mbps and 165.5 Mbps, respectively

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Sporting heroes honoured at this year's Belfast Sports Awards

Guests at the awards ceremony in City Hall recently included athletes, volunteers and coaches of all ages and abilities from across Belfast.



As well as a host of awards, three athletes were inducted into Belfast City Council's Sporting Hall of Fame - David Jeffrey MBE, Roy Coyle (Football) and Donna Armstrong (Cricket).

The award winners were: Pathways to Club, Sean Madden & Jahswill Emmanuel; Young Coach of the Year, Torrie Laverty; Senior Coach of the Year, Brendan Crossan & Joe McDaniel; Female Coach of the Year, Orla Le Mahieu; Disability Coach of the Year, Michael Hilland; Healthy Lifestyle - Shaftesbury

Healthy Living Centre; Volunteer of the Year, Conor McCann & Mary Matthews; Young Athlete of the Year, Aine Doherty; Senior Male Athlete of the Year, Stuart McCloskey; Senior Female Athlete of the Year, Victoria Catterson; Disability Athlete of the Year, James MacSorley; Junior Team of the Year - Lagan Valley Junior Men's Cross Country Team; Senior Team of the Year, Belfast Giants; Hall of Fame - Donna Armstrong, Roy Coyle & David Jeffrey.

Inducted into the Council's Sporting Hall of

Fame, Donna Armstrong is a leading light in the world of cricket representing and developing female cricket in Ireland as the NCU's first women's Irish International. Playing as a right-handed middle-order batsman, Donna made her international debut at the 1983 Centenary Tournament in the Netherlands. She finished her international career in 1991, having played 20 ODIs.

Former Northern Ireland international footballer and manager, Roy Coyle has won 50 trophies in a success-filled career, mostly

with Linfield at 31 and Glentoran at 17 titles.

While David Jeffrey began his professional playing career with Linfield, following a spell in the Manchester United youth. Joining Linfield in 1982, he played for 10 years and was club captain for much of that time scoring the crucial away goal against Shamrock Rovers in the 1984-1985 European Cup.

He was awarded an MBE in the 2021 Birthday Honours list for his contribution to football and community relations in Northern Ireland.



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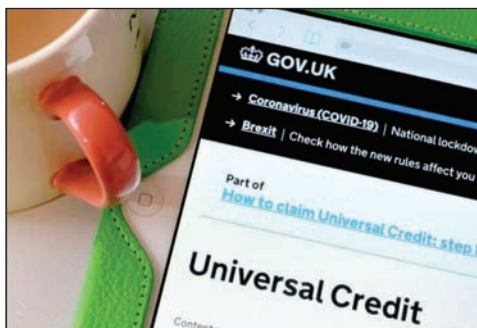
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Universal Credit allows for higher financial support towards registered childcare costs than Tax Credits and so families using childcare can often find that they are better off moving to Universal Credit.

The Government has committed to ensuring no one is worse off by moving to Universal Credit by providing 'Transitional Protection' to make up the loss between what is received under the old benefits, and Universal Credit. However, there are strict rules around the eligibility for Transitional



Protection so you should always seek independent advice before applying for Universal Credit.

Other benefit changes in 2024

In addition to

households being moved to Universal Credit as mentioned above, the amount that is being paid through all benefits, including Universal Credit, Tax Credits, Housing Benefit etc, is increasing from April 2024 by at least 6.7%. So, if you receive benefits, you may be entitled to more money from April onwards.

For free, independent advice on the financial support your family is entitled to, including with registered childcare costs, call our Family Benefits Advice Service on Freephone 0800 028 3008.

Last year, where we did a 'better off' calculation for a family, we identified an average of £5,600 in additional financial support.

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£70m support package unveiled

Health Minister Robin Swann has announced a £70million support package for social care providers and hospices.

The funding will help independent sector organisations deal with rising costs from the start of the new financial year, particularly forthcoming minimum wage increases.

The Minister said: "I am making this intervention to stabilise the provision of key services and ensure legal requirements are met.

"I have made clear that my ambition for social care is to see wages climb well beyond the minimum wage level. That is vital for the long-term sustainability of the sector and is an issue that will have to be tackled. I have established structures to advance this work and I hope to see progress on this issue in the coming months.

"This £70m package includes an increase in the regional funding rate for domiciliary care providers to £20.01 per hour, which I believe can help stabilise the service and support enhanced pay.



The Health Minister Robin Swann pictured with Ruth Crawford (aged 86) at her home in Belfast alongside her carer Julie-Anne Hosick from Connected Health.

"The 2024/25 budget is going to be severely challenging for all Departments, but I am determined to provide as much ongoing support as possible to the social care sector."

The £70m funding has been made available for pay cost increases in:

- Independent Sector (IS) Nursing Homes
- IS Residential Homes
- Supported Living

settings

- Commissioned Supported Accommodation
- IS Children's Homes
- IS Domiciliary Care
- Self-Directed Support (SDS) and Direct Payment
- HSC contracts in Community & Voluntary and Hospice sectors

The Minister added:

"I want to reiterate my sincere gratitude to care workers for everything they do. They play a vital role in society and we are immensely grateful for their contribution. Social care is uniquely placed to provide critical support to citizens, enabling them to live healthy and independent lives while also protecting capacity in our hospitals."



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Scooter Repair & Servicing scheme launched by Shopmobility Belfast!

More and more people are running into problems when buying mobility equipment online. Lack of aftercare services, no access to repairs and scam sellers are among the dangers of buying online!

The Belfast based charity has launched a new scooter repair service to help overcome some of these issues.

Shopmobility have been providing mobility equipment in shopping areas and visitor destinations across Northern Ireland for almost 30 years, however with mobility equipment more readily available on the market more people have turned to buying their own scooters and wheelchairs online.

Julie Guilar, Director at Shopmobility Belfast said

"Unfortunately there are a lot of people out there who aren't providing the service that these vulnerable people need. We have a lot of members coming in who have been paying over the odds for repairs, our own in-house maintenance team could help overcome some of these issues. We as an established and trusted charity want to offer a fair service for a fair price.

The new scheme is offering battery checks and any repairs that might be needed to equipment.

Julie says: "We want to see people living as independently as possible and ensure that they are being given proper service."

"Our Mission is to help people with mobility problems to use the facilities of Belfast City Centre and surrounding areas with greater freedom, independence, and dignity".

MESSAGE US OR CONTACT US ON: 028 9080 8091
www.shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk info@shopmobility.co.uk

What use are slugs and snails?

I belong to a generation which routinely killed or removed anything which might eat or otherwise damage a plant we admired or wanted to eat, bedding plants perhaps or home-grown lettuce or radishes.

Enemy number one was the slimy slug, closely followed by snails (a wee bit less slimy because of their shells).

Back then, I gave little thought to their use or function in nature, but in recent years, as I have experienced the decline in our wildlife, particularly other invertebrates such as insects, I've become more aware of the importance of all creatures and how they interact as part of a balanced natural world.

Slugs and snails are

loosely related over eons of evolution (slugs may have had shells at one time) and both live on the mess that nature often leaves behind, mostly dead and dying plants, and, like earthworms and fungi, recycle that waste (more efficiently than we do).

Of course, if they encounter a juicy flower seedling or vegetable, they'll eat it. But in fact, in most gardens, the 'damage' they do is relatively minor, and outweighed by their value...as food!

Most people like to see birds, and animals such as hedgehogs, in their gardens, but killing off all the slugs and snails would remove an important food-source from them (frogs are also partial to a slug or two, and they are prey for some insects). Even worse, unless properly controlled, slug pellets can actually kill other garden wildlife. I no longer think it makes any sense to scatter poisons in flower or vegetable beds.



We may not like the look of them or be happy when they munch on a particular plant, but slugs and snails are important to natural recycling, and as food for others...even us. Yes, I

recall with satisfaction a meal of Escargot served in garlic oil and butter... but not from my garden of course.

Vive les limaces, vive les escargots! JVA

Here's why you SHOULD fall asleep with your pet!

In 2023, 53% of UK adults owned a pet, a 2% rise compared to 2020. And while it's natural to want to share most of our lives with our furry friends, how far is too far?

According to a YouGov survey, almost half of Britons admit to letting their pets sleep in the same bed as them - Sleep expert Ashley Hainsworth from Bed Kingdom has looked at the pros and cons of doing this and whether it's right for you.

What are the benefits? Helps with Insomnia Falling asleep with your pet beside you can increase endorphin levels, thus reducing stress and anxiety. In turn, this can help you fall asleep quicker, which is ideal if you're someone who has difficulty getting some well-needed shut-eye.

Security and comfort If you live alone, sleeping with a pet can increase

your sense of security and heighten comfort levels. Feeling safe and relaxed is extremely important and can drastically improve your sleep quality.

Warmth A key factor in determining whether you have a good night's sleep is body temperature. If you feel the cold more than the average person, cuddling up to a warm pet at night may be precisely what you need to drift off.

Bonding Sleeping with your pet can significantly increase your bond and strengthen your relationship. You might find that you can read their body language better, and simply be more in tune with one

another, which can improve their behaviour and overall happiness as a result.

Are there any risks involved?

Like most things, letting your pet sleep in the same bed has some potential risks.

Sleep disruption Our pets are living beings and therefore, move around a lot; you may find that your pet is finding it difficult to settle and won't stay still, so their constant movement and rearranging may disrupt your sleep. One way to combat this is to invest in a bed large enough to accommodate you and your pets - this allows for any movement that does occur to go unnoticed.

Behavioural issues

There are varying arguments as to whether letting your pet sleep with you causes them separation anxiety.

Either way, it is important to stay vigilant, and if you notice any problem behaviours begin, consult a trainer or an animal behaviourist. Some signs to look out for include an increase in destructive behaviour, extreme vocalising like howling, barking or whining when you leave, and toileting inside the house, even if they are trained.

Should you let your pets sleep in the same bed?

Sleeping with your pets can be extremely beneficial to those who suffer from

loneliness or sleep disorders such as insomnia. However, if you're someone who likes your personal space at night or cannot commit to the upkeep needed for your bed to remain clean, perhaps letting your pet spend the night with you isn't the best option.

Ashley Hainsworth from Bed Kingdom has commented: "No one knows our pets like we do. When deciding whether to let your pets share the bed, you should consider several different factors, such as your lifestyle, sleeping habits and your pet's temperament. It has clear benefits, but the risks shouldn't be disregarded either."

All's well when the lawn's well.

Over recent years many of us have found a new appreciation for our garden spaces.



They truly do provide a space for relaxation and recuperation and the best garden is enjoyed alongside a luscious green lawn. Whether your garden is large or small, we're here to help you achieve a lawn you can all enjoy.

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It's not just when we treat your lawn, you'll benefit from GreenThumb. You

can contact us any time for advice on all things lawns, because we know the secret to a perfect lawn is working together. Get in touch today for a FREE lawn analysis and no-obligation quote: lisburn@greenthumb.co.uk or 02890 357 850.

TIP: One of the most important lawn care jobs for a good-looking lawn is correct and regular mowing. As the weather warms up it's likely your lawn will need mowing weekly. You should keep the cut between 25mm (1") and 40mm (1.6") in length.

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Home interior design trends for Spring 2024.

The interior design world is buzzing with new trends and ideas. According to House Beautiful and Zillow, the following are the top interior design trends for spring 2024:

Statement pieces: In 2024, we will see a shift from filler pieces to conversation starters. Sculptural furniture is coming to the fore, which means that even your smallest side table can make a big statement.

New neutrals: The evolution of Scandi-inspired design, from cool and minimalist to cosy and cocooning, informs an array of warm neutrals in 2024. Greys are being swapped for earthy beiges, contemporary off-whites and taupes that sit so well with the natural materials and modest decoration of Scandi homes.

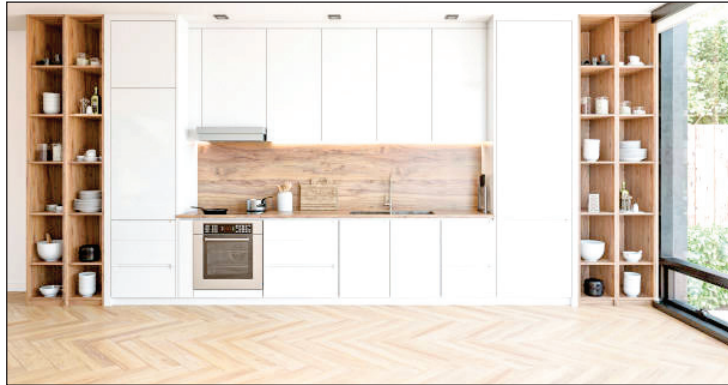
Ruffles: Ruffles - for the most part applied to cushions and table linen - are adding a bit of fun and whimsy to our homes. It's usually matched with a gingham print, ice cream shades or candy cane stripes like these fabulous Amuse

Bouche examples from Rose & Grey.

The one-wall kitchen: The one-wall kitchen is truly an exercise in ingenuity. This diminutive layout requires a real balance between storage capacity, functionality and flow - it can be tempting to install a whole row of cabinets on your one-wall kitchen, but that can be imposing. Open shelving can be a bit of a visual break, and adds opportunity for decoration - an important element in an otherwise functional space.

L-shaped and chaise sofas: The pragmatic amongst us are saving space with L-shaped and chaise sofas, turning awkward alcoves into seating. These sofas are perfect for small spaces and can be used to create a cozy and inviting atmosphere in the living spaces.

Relaxed silhouettes:



In 2024, we will see new relaxed silhouettes in interior design. This means that we will see more of comfortable and cozy furniture in our living spaces.

Playful trimmings: Playful trimmings are making a comeback in 2024. We will see more of bold patterns, textured fabrics, and

personalized decor items in our living spaces.

Vintage shopping: Vintage shopping is becoming more popular in 2024. It's a great way to save money and reduce waste. You can find unique pieces from flea markets and secondhand sellers destined for upcycling and repurposing.

Sensory gardens: Sensory

gardens are becoming more popular in 2024. They are a great way to connect with nature and create a relaxing atmosphere in your home.

Murano glass chandeliers: Murano glass chandeliers are making a comeback in 2024. They are perfect for adding a touch of elegance and sophistication to your living spaces.

Leap into spring this year at Urban Outlet!

Urban Outlet, a family run hardware and gardening store, situated on the Moneyreagh Road is your one stop shop for all things gardening and outdoor.

With a massive range of garden furniture, decorative aggregates, lawnmowers, power hoses and gardening tools, everything you need is right here. To top it off, Rockys Roast, located on the upper floor serves a wide variety of freshly baked traybakes and scones, fantastic coffees, and daily specials, all cooked in-house.

At Urban Outlet, you can find everything you need under one roof.

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treatments and grass seed to doors and floors, power tools and paint, everything you need is here.

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Whether it is a patio heater for those late evenings outside, or plant pots for the shrubs, you can find it at Urban Outlet.

We also have a massive range of

gazeboes and BBQ's, gas and charcoal. There is something for everybody at Urban Outlet.

We stock a massive range of decorative aggregates from slate to golden flint, as well as our own unique RockinColour product, you can bring your outdoors to life.

Why not pop in, grab a coffee and a soda, or a fantastic tray bake, and browse our offerings.

Go on, leap into spring this year at Urban Outlet.

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FILZMOOS IN AUSTRIA CAPTURED OUR HEARTS WITH UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

Our roving reporter goes on and off piste in Austria

When envisioning a magical winter wonderland, one imagines snow-covered landscapes, fir trees, cosy cabins, and everyone bundled up in warm hats and scarves.

Filzmoos embodies this picturesque scene perfectly.

During a recent family ski trip, we flew directly from Belfast International Airport to Salzburg with Jet2.

Upon arrival, our transfer awaited us, taking us on a scenic one-hour journey to the enchanting village of Filzmoos.

Our accommodation for four nights was at the 4-star NeubergerhofHotel nestled in the stunning

Salzburg mountains.

The comprehensive hotel program offers a variety of options for joint activities or individual enjoyment during a mountain holiday.

Before hitting the slopes, we indulged in the outdoor swimming pool, family games room, petting farm, outdoor spaces, and the delightful dining options in the restaurant.

Our primary purpose was skiing, and we were eager to begin. We gathered all our gear from the in-hotel shop to prepare for the adventure.

Ilhona from the Schischule in Filzmoos picked us up on the first day.

She outlined our morning and afternoon sessions with an instructor, a crucial step for beginners or those in need of a refresher.

Our instructor, Mickey, was a fantastic guide. He provided clear explanations, patiently corrected our mistakes, and helped us enhance our skiing experience.

For the children, Jordi made learning enjoyable while ensuring their safety and progress.

After a few hours of skiing in the morning, we used our lunch break to explore the charming village of Filzmoos and dine at the central restaurant, Happy

Filzmoos. This eatery provided ample outdoor and indoor seating with a diverse menu catering to various tastes.

During a snowy afternoon, we ventured up one of the mountains via cable car and marvelled at the breathtaking views overlooking the village. Stepping off the lift felt like entering Lapland, with knee-deep snow covering the landscape, creating a perfect setting for building numerous snowmen and snowwomen in no time. The experience of being in the mountains, detached from the world below, was truly unforgettable.

Another dining experience included a visit to Der Guster, a traditional Austrian restaurant located in the heart of Filzmoos. Known for its authentic Austrian cuisine and impeccable service, our waiter provided detailed

explanations of the dishes and recommendations to ensure we fully enjoyed the culinary delights of Austria.

On our final evening, we had the pleasure of a horse-drawn sleigh ride to Hofalm.

At the mountain's summit, we relished a delightful Alpine cuisine dinner at the Unterhofalm restaurant. The picturesque setting was adorned with snow and breathtaking panoramic views.

Filmooz not only offers skiing but is also an ideal destination for summer getaways.

You can experience the serene sight of colorful hot air balloons gliding over the snow-covered peaks of SalzburgerLand until Easter. Equally remarkable are the summer balloon rides in Filzmoos, promising an unforgettable adventure.



Balloon and ski adventures define the winter sports scene in Filzmoos, nestled in the heart of Ski amadé. From December to March, guests can enjoy balloon rides above the snow-clad mountains of Salzburger Sportwelt, adding a unique touch to winter holidays.

For a distinctive summer or winter vacation, consider Filzmoos.

With a plethora of family-friendly activities, this destination is bound to create lasting memories for all who visit.

For more information on Filzmoos visit www.filzmoos.at/en

For more information

on the general area in Austria please visit www.salzburgerLand.com.

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Green As A Neutral

Green is transcending its botanical roots to become a versatile neutral. Neutrals create a timeless look, but that does not mean we're confined to only beige, ivory, taupe and grey.



Axel Rush Green Velvet 3 Seater Sofa €1099

Truman Oslo Pine Leather Power Recliner 2 Seater Sofa 1799 Euros

Green is just as universal as most classic neutrals and adds a sense of calm and harmony. Whether it's your main furniture pieces or added as an accent, varied shades of green will bring a touch of organic sophistication to any room.

Nature
Green cultivates a nurturing environment that forms a soothing connection to nature. Especially at this time of year, a sense of calm and

relaxation is welcomed into our homes. Green brings about reminders of renewal, with its connection to grass and plants budding in spring.

The Truman Oslo Pine Leather Power Recliner Sofa is a stunning green centrepiece to add to your living room. It features lush leather upholstery that radiates elegance and is the perfect green hero piece to add to your living room.

New Neutrals
Greys are being swapped for more earthy tones; green makes the perfect addition to this mix. This is branching from the evolution of Scandi-inspired designs from minimalist and cool, to warm and cozy.

The usual greys are being changed out for warmer colours like off-white and taupe's, to create an overall more cocooning vibe in homes. Green adds

the perfect amount of freshness to a new neutral ensemble.

If you're looking to dip your toe into this trend and incorporate a splash of green, accent chairs are the perfect choice. The Scandi inspired Copenhagen Green Fabric Chair captures a cool, contemporary look. Its compact footprint enhances any space without overwhelming your existing scheme.

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ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: HOME DESIGN TRENDS FOR SPRING 2024

From playful patterns to sustainable materials, here are some of the top home design trends to look out for if you are planning some home décor this year.

Sustainable Materials
Sustainability is a growing concern for many homeowners, and it's no surprise that sustainable materials are becoming more popular in home design. In 2024, we can expect to see more homes incorporating eco-friendly materials such as bamboo, reclaimed wood, and recycled glass.

Bold Patterns
Bold patterns are making a comeback in 2024, with homeowners looking to add a touch of personality to their homes. From geometric shapes to floral prints, bold patterns are a great way to add interest to

any room.
Natural Textures
This year we can expect to see more natural textures in home design. From woven baskets to jute rugs, natural textures are a great way to add warmth and depth to any space.

Statement Lighting
Statement lighting is a great way to add a touch of drama to any room.

In 2024, we can expect to see more homeowners incorporating statement lighting fixtures such as chandeliers and pendant lights into their homes.

Vintage Accents
Vintage accents



are a great way to add character to any home. This season we can expect to see

more homeowners incorporating vintage pieces such as antique mirrors, old-fashioned

clocks, and vintage textiles into their homes.
Bold Colours

Embrace bold colours. From deep blues to rich greens, bold colours are a

great way to add drama and interest to any space.

Smart Home Technology

Smart home technology is becoming more popular in homes across the UK, and it's no surprise why. Voice-activated

assistants, smart thermostats, and automated lighting systems are now everyday essentials.

By incorporating these home design trends into your home, you can create a space that is both stylish and functional!

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A shopper's paradise, Glasgow is recognised as having the best retail therapy in the UK outside of London. Consistently voted 'top of the shops', the city is Scotland's premier shopping destination.

Not just shopping, Glasgow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

With a simple flat fare of £44 which includes the cost of the ferry and your bag, our Belfast – Glasgow Express offers a really attractive, convenient and low-cost alternative to flying.

The service is operated by HANNON Coach and leaves twice a day from Belfast, Europa Bus Station and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'.

The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option.

There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan



Bus Station.

Company director Aodh Hannon says people seem to really love the convenience of the service as we take you right into the heart of the city centre.

"People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers and with no extra charge for luggage it is a massive

help with keeping the cost of a break down." said Mr Hannon.

The service can be booked online at www.hannoncoach.com up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

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ACTIVITIES & ATTRACTIONS ALONG THE CAUSEWAY COASTAL ROUTE

A whole host of attractions and activities await travelers along the Causeway Coastal Route.

Become king or queen of the North

Whether you're a fan of the show or not, the Game of Thrones® Tour, by Giant Tours Ireland, offers you a great way to see some of the most spectacular parts of Northern Ireland. Many of Northern Ireland's remote locations featured as filming locations for the HBO hit TV series, and on an intimate tour like this, you'll be setting foot in the real life 'Westeros'.

Thrones will want to experience an aerial tour of the 'Seven Kingdoms', catch a boat from 'Lordsport Harbour' and enjoy themed afternoon tea in Ballygally Castle Hotel. Or why not pack up the car and do the Game of Thrones® self-drive tour, exploring the various filming locations at your own leisure? The official app will help you navigate your way around each of the

'10 doors' and other filming locations from the show.

Cross that bridge when you come to it... if you're brave enough!

Having been inspired by all the stories of bravery and valour, you will no doubt have the courage to cross the famous Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge... or will you? It's much sturdier now than when it was originally built by salmon fishermen over 350 years ago, yet this experience never fails to stir up all the senses.

With a strong breeze from the Atlantic Ocean blowing through your hair, the sound of the waves crashing and swirling 30 metres below your feet and the smell of the sea filling your nostrils, it's exceptionally exhilarating. An unforgettable opportunity to get back to nature and test your nerves of steel.

If you prefer to view



the bridge from an alternative perspective, you can always see what it looks like from the water with Causeway Coast Kayaking Tours.

Embrace a Giant Spirit Further along the Causeway Coastal

Route is Northern Ireland's most famous site. Legend has it that the Giant's Causeway was created when legendary Irish giant, Fionn MacCool, constructed a bridge to Scotland to take on his arch foe Bannandonner.

In reality, the famous causeway is the result of a volcanic eruption which left behind this strangely perfect hexagonal patchwork that reaches out into the sea.

The most straightforward way of experiencing the

Giant's Causeway is to begin your visit at the Visitor Centre and then stroll down to the intriguing stones to search out distinctive formations such as the Camel, Wishing Chair, Granny and Organ.

Whatever way you choose to explore it,

the Giant's Causeway, the only UNESCO World Heritage site in Northern Ireland, is well worth the visit.

If you're keen to keep your feet dry, then you might prefer to take a day trip over to the rugged beauty of Rathlin Island. This is Northern Ireland's only inhabited offshore island, though it's often so quiet you wouldn't really know. There are scenic walking trails that bring you to seal colonies and you can visit the popular RSPB Seabird Centre situated at the distinctive West Lighthouse, known as Ireland's only 'upside down' lighthouse!

Inspiring spirits from the past

Back on the coast road is the stunning Dunluce Castle. Built around 1500 by a local family, the castle sparked the imagination of writer C.S. Lewis who reimagined it as the Cair Pereval,

home to the rulers of Narnia. Though it has been a ruin for many years, it remains as inspiring as ever and is likely one of the most Instagrammed castles on the planet.

Equally dramatic is the Mussenden Temple which perches some forty metres above the Atlantic Ocean and offers spectacular views west over Downhill Strand towards County Donegal and back east towards Casterock beach Portstewart and Portrush.

With all that going on, where else would you prefer to be?

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure information is correct, we strongly advise checking in advance before you travel to your intended destination to ensure its open and book tickets if applicable.

For more ideas see www.discovernorthernireland.com/destinations

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PORTRUSH NAMED SEASIDE WITH THE THIRD CHEAPEST PARKING!

In a new study conducted by car check experts, Motorscan, Brighton has been ranked as the most expensive seaside to park your car this Easter holiday.

Collating data via Parkopedia, the study evaluates the average parking costs across 30 prominent UK seascides. The analysis focuses on parking spots available on an 8-hour basis within a 30-minute or less walking distance from the centre.

Parents always look for ways to keep their kids entertained during half term, and a beach trip is a top choice. However, parking costs can put a dampener on the day.

This is particularly true in Brighton, which takes the top spot as the seaside with the most expensive parking, averaging at £24.21 for an eight-hour stay.

Ranking as second most expensive is popular Cornish town, Newquay,

where the average parking fee stands at £12.32 for eight hours. While still a significant expense, this rate is half that of Brighton's, offering a much more affordable option.

Claiming the third spot is another beloved Cornish spot, Falmouth, with a marginal difference of just £0.20, totalling £12.12 for parking over the same period.

Southern-on-Sea claims the fourth spot with an average cost of £11.50, while Bournemouth, a popular Dorset seaside destination, follows closely behind in fifth place with an average of £10.42 for eight hours.

The ten seascides with the most expensive



parking:

Seaside parking costs appear to decrease as visitors venture further north. For instance, St Andrews, Fife, claims the title of cheapest seaside to park, with an average cost of just £1.90 for eight hours—12 times

less than Brighton.

East Yorkshire seaside town, Hornsea, takes the title of second cheapest, coming in at an average of £1.98 for parking this Easter, over the same time period.

Portrush, in Northern Ireland, ranks as the third

cheapest seaside parking spot, with an average cost of £3.47 - three times less than Falmouth.

Morecambe, located in Lancashire, clinches the fourth spot for the most budget-friendly seaside parking options in the UK, with an average

eight-hour cost of £4.33.

Speaking on the findings, Head of Vehicle Intelligence at Motorscan, Oliver Thompson said "As evidenced by our latest study, parking costs can significantly impact holiday experiences, especially during peak periods like Easter half term.

Brighton's staggering average parking fee of £24.21 tops the charts, highlighting the financial strain families may face when planning beach outings".

"On the contrary, St Andrews emerges as a beacon of affordability, offering seaside parking at just £1.90 on average. These

findings underscore the importance of informed decision-making and strategic planning to maximise enjoyment while minimising expenses during holiday travels. Just make sure that you're prioritising safety and security when deciding where to park your car too."

EXCITING FUTURE AWAITS FOR THE STRAND ARTS CENTRE

An exciting refurbishment project to preserve Northern Ireland's only operational Art Deco picture house gets underway soon and will secure the Strand Art Centre's future for the community.

The Strand will reopen mid-2025 in time for their 90th birthday, boasting:

- World-class performance spaces with back-stage facilities
- Disability access throughout
- Restored front stalls as a unique theatre and screening space
- High-end screening room
- Two creative learning studios
- An interactive exhibition celebrating Northern Ireland's picturehouse past
- Brand new licensed café

The refurb will result in an exciting year-round programme including:

- Quality live theatre, music and comedy

- Touring productions and festivals
- Latest blockbusters plus classic, cultural and educational films with top quality projection and sound
- Performing and visual arts classes
- Creative industries skills development workshops
- Hire space for community and charity groups

History Dating back to 1935, the Strand was originally a single screen cinema. Its maritime design was influenced by its proximity to the Harland & Wolff shipyard. The cinema thrived for decades, and became established as an east Belfast landmark. In the



1980s, the building's interior was subdivided to meet public demand for more film choice.

In 2013, the Strand Arts Centre was established to prevent the closure of the building. The charity repurposed the building as a thriving arts centre.

Be part of it You can contribute to the refurbishment through the 'Name a

Seat' campaign, by having an inscribed plaque on their new seats for years to come. If you have memories of The Strand, or picture houses past, you can get in touch by emailing rosie@strandartscentre.com

(028) 9065 5830 Also our website is incorrect in the write up, currently it says www.strandartscentre.com

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WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING GARDEN FURNITURE

As the days lengthen and the sun graces our outdoor spaces, it's time to turn our attention to garden furniture. Whether you're creating a cozy corner for morning coffee or planning grand alfresco gatherings, choosing the right furniture is crucial.

Let's delve into the essential factors to bear in mind when making your selection.

Style and Harmony
Before you dive into the world of garden furniture, pause and consider your garden's overall style. Here's how:

Complement or Contrast: Decide whether you want your furniture to blend seamlessly with your home's aesthetic or create an intentional contrast. Modern house? Opt for minimalist lines. Traditional property? Antique garden furniture from the 19th or early 20th century might be a perfect fit.

Material Matters: Different styles often align with specific materials. For instance, mid-century items suit contemporary properties, while classic designs pair well with traditional gardens.

Practicality and Functionality
Your garden furniture should not only look good but also serve its purpose.

Consider how you'll use the furniture. Are you hosting family dinners, summer parties, or lounging sessions? Each scenario demands different pieces.

Dual-Height Tables:

Versatile tables that transition from coffee to dining height are excellent for entertaining.

Fire Pit Tables: Extend your evenings with warmth by choosing furniture that includes a fire pit table.

Material Selection
The material you choose affects durability, maintenance, and aesthetics. Here are common options:

Wood: Classic and timeless, wooden furniture blends well with natural surroundings. Opt for hardwoods like teak or eucalyptus for longevity.

Metal: Aluminum, wrought iron, and steel offer sleek designs. Ensure they are rust-resistant and lightweight.

Wicker/Rattan: These woven materials exude a relaxed vibe. Synthetic wicker is weather-resistant and easy to care for.

Plastic/Resin: Affordable and low-maintenance, plastic furniture is ideal for casual setups.

Comfort and Cushions
Comfort is paramount, especially if you plan to spend hours outdoors. Consider:

Ergonomics: Test chairs and loungers for comfort. Look for supportive



designs.

Cushions: Invest in quality outdoor cushions. They add coziness and can withstand the elements.

Storage: Check if the furniture has storage options for cushions during rainy days.

Size and Space
Measure your outdoor area before purchasing furniture:

Scale: Avoid overcrowding. Choose furniture that fits comfortably without overwhelming the space.

Flexible Arrangements: Modular sets allow you to rearrange pieces as needed.

Foldable/Stackable: Opt for foldable chairs or stackable pieces for compact storage.

Weather Resistance
Our unpredictable climate demands weather-resistant furniture:

Waterproofing: Look for furniture treated to withstand rain and moisture.

UV Protection: Sun exposure can fade colors and weaken materials. UV-resistant finishes are essential.

Cover Options: Invest in covers to protect furniture during harsh weather.

Budget and Longevity
Set a budget and balance

it with quality:
Invest Wisely: Quality furniture lasts longer and provides better value.

Maintenance Costs: Consider upkeep expenses (painting, sealing, etc.) for wooden furniture.

Warranty: Check warranty details for peace of mind.

Remember, garden furniture isn't just about aesthetics; it's about creating an inviting outdoor haven. So, take your time, envision lazy afternoons and lively gatherings, and choose pieces that enhance both beauty and functionality. Happy furnishing!

Knock golf club is situated beside the Stormont Estate in East Belfast

KNOCK GOLF CLUB

Located beside the Stormont Estate in east Belfast, Knock is a beautiful parkland golf course measuring 6,428 yards, par 70.

Originally established in 1895, the course moved to the current location "Summerfield" in 1920, with leading golf course architects, Colt, Mackenzie and Allison being instructed to design the new course layout.

Always in superb condition with fast greens and beautiful fairways, the course still retains many of the original features that were imagined all those years ago.

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TIPS FOR A CHILD-FRIENDLY LIVING SPACE

Having a home you can be proud to show off is no mean feat when you have young children.



You want a clutter-free, organised, relaxing space, but the kids probably have other ideas. Well with some smart purchases and clever storage solutions, you can achieve a style that evokes serenity and calm, even if your real life is far from it. Here are some tips and tricks to help create a child-friendly living space.

For walls, consider darker colours instead of lighter ones, especially on lower surface areas that are prone to scuffs, knocks and could be used as a canvas for a potential crayon masterpiece. Choose a hard-wearing interior paint that is scuff-resistant, wipeable and up to ten times more durable than standard matt emulsion. For floors, opt for laminate and wooden flooring in high-traffic areas. When choosing carpets for living rooms, similarly,

consider darker colours as they will show the least amount of stains. There's now a full range of child-friendly carpets available, many of which also come with stain-resistance as an added bonus.

When choosing a sofa, large corner styles are ideal for family living spaces. Leather sofas are particularly child-friendly as they look smart, classic and most importantly can wipe-clean. Some fabric sofas also come with a Staingard service to protect your fabric sofas in the likely event of spills and scuffs.

Storage boxes and tables are perfect for hiding all those toys and clutter. In one full sweep, you can collect a whole heap of toys and pretend they don't exist with the simple close of a lid..

Pretty throws and accessories will give

you a polished finish and help draw the eye away from any potential mess. Think about contemporary patterns and textures in a range of complementary colours. Blankets and throws are warming and welcoming (and they're also useful for hiding spills on sofas and chairs where needed)..

Your hallway is the first thing you see when you walk in the door, and for most families, this will involve a display of strewn coats, wellies, sporting gear, school bags and books. Look for clever storage that can fit into the space under your, resulting in a clutter-free hallway, freeing up floor space and removing obstacles - which is especially useful if you have to manoeuvre prams and car seats through the hallway.

When it comes to reordering your house,

How to... declutter your home

Clear out the clutter: Make your home a cleaner, happier place

BE BRAVE
Most people find it hard to throw away stuff, but you can't attach sentimental value to everything you own.

When your house is cluttered, nothing looks good. So, as you go through your possessions, ask yourself which of them you actually love or use. If not, why not?

Maybe it's a wedding dress you secretly hate, a dress that doesn't suit you. Let it go.

ONE ROOM AT A TIME
Flitting between rooms makes de-cluttering a much bigger task, one almost impossible to complete.

So set aside a day to do one room and commit to finishing it. Stack everything that lives elsewhere into cardboard boxes to deal with later.

MAKE A MESS
To clear up your home, you have to turn it into a proverbial bomb site first.

The best de-cluttering method is to pull every single item from your shelves, drawers and cupboards and lay it all out so you can see exactly what everything is.

This tactic works well for clearing out your wardrobe; as well as gathering rags to chuck, you'll 're-find' clothes you'd forgotten about.

GET LOGICAL
When it comes to reordering your house,

there are two basic rules. First, store like with like: all batteries should live in one place, so when you need a new one, you know exactly where to find it.

Second, keep belongings in the room where they are used because when things migrate around the house your home becomes a black hole and you'll never find anything.

As an extension of this second rule, store things as close to the place you use them as possible: washing powder next to the washing machine, tea in the cupboard above the kettle.

Follow a logical layout for your house and it will stay uncluttered.

SECRET SPACES
Think vertically and you solve the problem of storing things you use only occasionally, such as Christmas decorations.

Stash these things in your attic and bring them down only when you need them.

Going vertically again, store back-up bathroom supplies such as toilet roll and spare bottles of shampoo at the top of your linen cupboard.

Holiday items, such as sarongs and ski jackets, can live in suitcases under your bed, freeing up your living space.

NOT ALL CLUTTER IS JUNK

Clearing out your home needn't turn you into



a robot. We've all got treasured mementoes that might not look much to other people yet they mean the world to us: cinema ticket stubs from your first date, your first Mother's Day card, a lock of baby hair.

Top tip? Pack your keepsakes in a special box rather than leave them scattered all over the house.

STORAGE SOLUTIONS
It's tempting to splash out on pretty storage boxes before you've started decluttering. One word: don't. You're better off sorting your trash from your treasure and then assessing what storage solutions you need.

A place for everything. co.uk is great for items

such as stackable shoeboxes and wicker bathroom baskets.

TRAIN YOUR CHILDREN

Children can behave like Tasmanian Devils, charging around the house, trailing clutter wherever they go.

To encourage youngsters to develop good habits, make sure you have something in which they can stash their toys. A few big, lidded containers are easier to manage than lots of little ones that can overflow.

GET RID, FEEL GOOD
For the sake of your mental health, don't add up the cost of the money you've wasted.

Instead, focus on how decluttering makes you

feel good: donate items in good condition to your local charity shop.

As a reward for all your hard work, make money selling the best of your unwanted goods on eBay.

And if that's too much hassle there are companies who will collect your goods and give you cash!

RELAX
Without clutter clogging up your home, you'll find it is twice as easy to relax. It's even a pleasure to clean and decorate because you're not staring mess in the face every day.

Be warned: you could enter a second honeymoon period with your 'new' home and decide you never want to move out, even when the property market picks up.

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 - You are awaiting the outcome of a job interview.
- Your parent or guardian is receiving Child Benefit on your behalf.
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Full details of the jobs as they become available can be found by searching for 'Online and Print Marketing for Businesses' or 'Social Media Marketing' on www.jobapplyni.com.

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Abarth reveals the New Abarth 600e, the most powerful ever

The New Abarth 600e recently its first public debut in Milan, where the new commercial was shot. Ready, exciting, muscular, and aggressive, the first pictures instantly reveal the "evil" essence of the Abarth 600e Scorpionissima launch version, which will be produced in a limited edition of 1,949 units.

Designed to leave Abarth fans speechless, the Scorpionissima model is built around three main features: a design to reach maximum performance, a car structure to make it the most powerful Abarth ever, and a competitive spirit to attract motor enthusiasts. Thanks to its loaded equipment, the New Abarth 600e will be able to thrill enthusiasts, giving them the possibility to drive safely without giving up on the aggressive and muscular look of their car.

Equipped with 240HP, the New Abarth 600e Scorpionissima is fiercely competitive and powerful.

There has never been a more powerful Abarth. In addition, the equipment of this new Abarth proves that performance is the mantra that inspired Abarth engineers. Made to be unique in the field of electric cars, the Abarth 600e will feature a mechanical limited-slip differential that guarantees excellent driving stability, improved handling, and traction.

The exceptional performance of the limited-slip differential takes the car to new heights, especially when combined with its high-performance tyres, which were jointly developed with the



supplier for Formula E to ensure maximum grip and guarantee excellent racing dynamics in all kinds of conditions.

A harmonious equilibrium is attained by balancing performance and limited resistance, ensuring an improved range in an

electric vehicle. From the exterior, it is clearly an Abarth! The exclusive Hypnotic Purple, the launch color inspired

by the post-puncture hypnotic effect, highlights its aggressiveness, while the aerodynamic rear spoiler is designed to maximize performance. It also features a large footprint, expansive wheels, a low profile, and 20-inch wheels designed to accommodate an extensive brake system. Moreover, the New Abarth 600e Scorpionissima will come with an authenticity certificate. And of course, there is more to come. Stay tuned.

Abarth's goal – to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary – is once again achieved with the most challenging yet performing

project developed in recent years. The new jewel in Abarth's house is a combination of knowledge,

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survey of your property and will always be on hand to answer any questions you might have. Offering style as well as substance, Garolla electric garage doors are available in 21 colours and come in two different slat sizes to perfectly fit any opening. Avoid any hidden charges with Garolla, where an instant quote comes inclusive of measuring, fitting and VAT. For more information visit their website www.Garolla.co.uk or, alternatively, give them a call on 028 9246 0024







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SPRING GARDENING GUIDE

As our gardens emerge from their winter slumber, it's time to embrace the spring gardening trends that will shape our outdoor spaces in 2024.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, here's your guide to creating a vibrant and resilient garden in the United Kingdom:

The Joyful Garden:
Last year's trend of serene, meditative spaces is evolving. Inject some playfulness into your garden this spring. Take inspiration from the RHS No Adults Allowed garden at Chelsea, designed by children – a Chelsea first! It features a den, carnivorous plants, and even a water slide. Channel your inner child with bold colours, playful textures, and whimsical elements that bring a smile to your face. Remember, plants impact our mood, so choose wisely – ornamental grass for movement, roses for scent, and more.
Gardens for All:
Don't have a plot of

your own? No worries! This year, there are plenty of options for urban gardeners. Explore balcony container gardens, portable raised beds, and vertical gardens. Attend the RHS's first-ever Urban Show in Manchester this April for ideas. Guerilla gardening (planting in public spaces) is also gaining popularity. Check out the Garden Organic's Growing Buddies scheme, empowering housing association tenants to green up shared community spaces.
Potty for Pots:
Container gardening saw a 200% increase last year, with more households engaging in it. Sarah Raven's book, A Year Full of Pots, offers endless possibilities for pot gardening. Get creative with containers – from terracotta pots to



hanging baskets. Plant colourful flowers, herbs, or even small vegetables. The versatility of pots allows you to experiment and create mini gardens wherever you like.
Blossom Displays and Pruning:

Spring is the perfect time to create stunning blossom displays. Plant flowering trees like cherry, apple, or pear for a burst of colour. Prune winter-damaged shrubs and trees to encourage healthy

growth. Remove dead wood and shape plants as needed. Remember to check specific pruning requirements for different species.
Mowing the Lawn: As temperatures rise, your lawn will start growing.

Begin regular mowing, but avoid cutting too short. Aim for a height of around 2.5 to 3 inches. Regular mowing encourages thick, healthy grass.
Planting Bulbs: Spring-flowering

bulbs like daffodils, tulips, and crocuses should be planted in autumn, but if you missed the boat, consider buying potted bulbs and planting them now. They'll still bloom beautifully.
Weeding and Feeding:
Tackle weeds early to prevent them from taking over. Apply a balanced fertilizer to boost plant growth.
Soil Preparation:
Improve soil structure by adding organic matter. Compost, well-rotted manure, or leaf mould will enrich the soil and enhance plant health.
Wildlife-Friendly Gardening:
Create habitats for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Plant nectar-rich flowers and provide water sources.
Start Sowing: Sow seeds of hardy annuals directly into the soil. These include poppies,

cornflowers, and calendula. They'll bloom later in the season.
Prune
Roses: Prune hybrid tea roses and floribunda roses to encourage new growth and better flowering.
Divide Perennials:
Divide overcrowded perennials like hostas, daylilies, and irises. Replant the divisions for healthier plants.
Spring Cleaning: Clear debris, dead leaves, and fallen twigs. A tidy garden looks more inviting.
Remember, gardening is not just about aesthetics – it's about connecting with nature, improving mental well-being, and contributing to a healthier planet. So, put on your gardening gloves, grab your trowel, and let's welcome spring with open arms!

7 tips to consider when adding an en suite

These days many potential buyers consider at least one en suite bathroom a must-have for the master bedroom.

You want the en suite to be attractive and seem as spacious as possible so that it gets the use it deserves. Here are 7 top tips to consider when

planning your en suite addition:
It's important to check your water supply and drainage accessibility. If you cannot access

the main soil pipe then you will need to install a macerator, thus increasing the overall cost of your installation. Be sure to plan all

pipework and electricity supply cables carefully, ensuring that they are well hidden whenever possible. Be sure to utilise your ceiling or



under floor space if you have it. Remember that ventilation is now a building regulations requirement. When

planning anything within a small space, it's important to implement good ventilation to ensure plenty of fresh air. Be sure to insulate the entire area properly to prevent condensation, especially if the en suite has one wall as an outer brick wall. When consider what furniture and bathroom equipment you will be using in the en suite, look to keep your design minimal and maximise the available space. Space isn't something

most of us have in abundance. Look to utilise a single colour scheme so the eye doesn't become distracted, and utilise mirrors and decorative spot lights wherever possible. Not every en suite addition needs to be limited to a small space added to your master bedroom. Of course, the toilet area needs to be private but other additions can potentially be placed in the bedroom area.

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THINGS YOUR HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE MAY NOT COVER

As your home is probably the biggest, most expensive asset you will ever own, it's a good idea to protect it in any way possible.

This might involve buying CCTV cameras, burglar alarms and in some areas even window shutters, and most certainly will involve signing on the dotted line on home insurance.

The right policy will help you to pick up the pieces should an emergency occur, but it's also important to be aware of the things that aren't covered, many current policies don't cover for accidental damage.

All too often, people forget to read the small print and only find out they don't have adequate protection when they come to make a claim, so here are five things your insurance probably won't cover you for:

1. Fences, gates and moveable property

Believe it or not, fences, gates and other moveable property are not protected

in most home insurance policies, so if bad weather is due it's essential to batten down the hatches to ensure extensive damage does not occur. All loose objects including outside furniture and gardening tools should be locked away and repairs to broken gates must be made in good time to ensure they're not made worse in poor conditions.

2. Structural maintenance
Many homeowners presume that their insurance policy will cover any structural maintenance that needs to take place on their property – but this is simply not the case. Many insurers do not count standard or long-term wear and tear such as loose roof tiles or a crumbling wall as claimable, meaning you'll probably have to foot the bill yourself.

Of course, if lightning strikes and damage is



caused this would be seen as a definable event and one which most insurers would cover, but always read the fine print before make presumptions.

3. Damp

While many insurance companies will pay out in the event of a flood – although expect to pay high premiums if you live

in a flood prone area – they will not always cover the cost of damp maintenance. Regular damp caused by poor insulation, for instance, is one of the

most common exclusions on insurance policies giving many homeowners a headache when they realise they're responsible for treating the damp.

4. Blocked drains
Not only are blocked drains stinky and annoying, they're also not usually covered by home insurance. This is because a blockage is often caused by people putting the wrong things down toilets and sinks, and therefore many insurance companies aren't prepared to pay out for such general maintenance. The good news is there are many ways to unblock drains yourself from using a good old toilet plunger and a bit of elbow grease to throwing three large tablespoons of baking soda down the sink followed by several glugs of vinegar – the chemical reaction of which gets rid of any gunk that's built up over time.

5. Leaking pipes
If the water pipes in your home are old they

may rust and leak. If you notice water dripping from your water system, you might be tempted to jump on the phone to your insurance company, but it's wise to read the details of your insurance policy first. This is because leaking pipes, which have simply deteriorated, are often just considered a generic maintenance issue and are not worthy of a pay out. That said, if the leak has occurred due to a floor, landslide, earthquake or other natural disaster, you might be covered.

Taking out home insurance is a great way to safeguard your property, but be aware that every policy has exclusions limiting what you can and can't claim for.

Disclaimer: This is a collaborative article and always read your insurance policy terms and conditions.

10 interior design choices that are keeping from selling your home

A real estate expert has identified the interior decor choices likely to put off prospective homebuyers - with pastel colours named the biggest offender.

The findings, compiled by real estate experts Agent Advice, follow an analysis of decor-related Google searches nationwide over the last year to identify the most and least popular home features and design elements.

Anyone looking to list their property for sale may want to consider making simple changes to better suit buyers' preferences over the next few months, as spring (March through May) is generally considered the best time to sell your home.

Speaking on the importance of attracting buyers, Chris Heller - Co-Founder of Agent Advice - says: "When listing your home for sale, those that are decorated well are more visually appealing and therefore more likely to stick in buyers' minds.

Many buyers will even be willing to pay more for an aesthetically pleasing property as it requires less immediate renovation or redecoration.

"This gives you an advantage in the competitive real estate market, particularly during peak periods like March, April, and May. Staging your rooms in a way that feels inviting and comfortable makes it easier for buyers to imagine themselves living in the property, whether viewing it in person or online. Hence, the decor is really key."

And it turns out that sellers who incorporated pastel colours into their decor after they rose in popularity early last year may want to redecorate, as they're the least appealing colour palette to

prospective buyers right now.

Pastel colours - especially pink, baby blue, and lilac - dominated social media over the last year due to things like the Barbie film release and an appreciation for retro hues, but their popularity has clearly waned as we head into the peak 2024 season.

The second design choice likely to turn buyers off your home came out as scalloped furniture, which also saw a rise in demand last year, especially among homeowners who favour a vintage, doll-like or 'mermaid-core' aesthetic.

Following as the third most offputting choice is antique farmhouse decor, which includes things like wall panelling, hardwood flooring, and rustic brass hardware.

Similarly, the fourth least

popular decor decision is upcycled furniture, with many fans of a farmhouse aesthetic thrifting and repurposing vintage pieces for their home.

Revamping old furniture proved especially popular on social media in the last year, as creators share their passion projects, but many buyers may struggle to see the appeal - especially if they prefer a modern or sleek aesthetic.

Rounding out the five design choices that sellers should rectify is incorporating industrial elements, the middle point between modern and farmhouse aesthetics.

However, the use of exposed metal, minimalist features, and bare bricks inspired by industrial spaces like factories may prove offputting to some who see it as 'cold.'

Also among the least desirable decor choices are Scandinavian elements - characterised by a minimalist approach and blend of textures - followed by botanical wallpaper, vintage decor, gold cabinet hardware, and geometric wallpaper.

The ten most offputting interior decor choices in

- 2024
- Interior Decor Choice
- 1 Pastel colors
- 2 Scalloped furniture
- 3 Antique farmhouse decor
- 4 Upcycled furniture
- 5 Industrial decor
- 6 Scandinavian decor
- 7 Botanical wallpaper
- 8 Vintage decor
- 9 Gold cabinet hardware

10 Geometric wallpaper
On the other side of the scale, among the most searched-for design choices is an accent wall, which can change the size, shape, and feel of a room depending on the colour and design elements, which seemingly strikes a chord with buyers.

The most popular

choice is pendant lighting, with oversized pendants predicted to be a 2024 trend, while the second top choice came out as minimalist elements like monochromatic colour palettes, open floor plans, and natural light.

For more info see <https://www.agentadvice.com/>

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