



CHS GROUP
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire



January 2025 Newsletter

Welcome to our January newsletter! In our first edition in 2025, we share news of our rent increases, restructured Property Service team, our gas and electrical contractor's rebrand and how you can register for our myCHS online customer portal, as well as remind you of the benefits of having home contents insurance. Read on to find out more...

Rent changes from April 2025

Every April, the rent we require for homes can be increased, and is set by the government's inflation rate (CPI) at the previous September, plus 1%. In September 2024, the CPI rate was 1.7%, so the maximum that your rent can be increased this April by 2.7%.

Although this year's rent increase will be lower than the last two years, we're very aware and conscious of the continuing pressures many people face due to the cost of living. CHS has decided that it will be necessary to apply the maximum rent increase of 2.7% this April. We understand this may cause concern, so we have

included our reason for this decision below, along with advice on how to access services to see if you're eligible for support.

There are several reasons as to why rent increases are needed every year. The rapidly increasing cost of the services we provide and maintaining our homes, as well as ensuring our homes comply with our net-zero targets means that big investment is needed over the coming years. In the long term, this will mean that your homes are better maintained and that we can continue to provide the services you need.

If you're already receiving housing benefit or rent payments of Universal Credit, the rent increase in April will be covered by your existing benefits so you should not be financially worse off. Other benefits, such as Universal Credit and Child Benefit will increase in April 2025 by 1.7%, and state pensions will go up by 4.1%. Additionally, the National Living Wage will increase by 6.7%, which may benefit some of you with wider cost of living now that inflation has fallen.

If you currently are not receiving housing benefit or Universal Credit, but are struggling with household finances, you may be eligible to claim support. If you are over the state pension age and on a lower income, you can apply for Pension Credits which include the Winter Fuel Allowance.

If you are a shared owner your rent is set differently and we'll be in touch.

You can use a benefits checker such as this: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>. This is a simple online calculator that can give you an estimate of what you could be entitled to.

If you're struggling to pay your rent or get support, please speak to us. You can contact your Housing Officer or our Customer Services Team on [0300 111 3555](tel:03001113555). There is no need to suffer in silence, we're always here to help.

You can also get help from:

- **Cambridge & District Citizens Advice (Cambridge & South Cambs)**



Email: <https://www.cambridgecab.org.uk/help-advice/get-advice>



Call: [0808 278 7808](tel:08082787808)

- **Citizens Advice Rural Cambs (Fenland, Huntingdon. Limited advice for East Cambs)**



Email: <https://www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk/>



Call: [0808 278 7807](tel:08082787807)



Meet our Property Service Team

As part of our efforts to improve our services and efficiency for you, our tenants, there have been some key structural changes within the Property Service team. Our team, which has previously consisted of the Surveyors and the Performance Quality team, has now been reorganised to better handle repairs, complaints and compliance matters.

Our Performance Quality team have been split into two separate groups. The Performance Quality team will now focus on repairs and complaints handling, ensuring that any issues are resolved quickly and effectively. Alongside this, a new Compliance Team has been formed to manage all compliance related matters, including areas such as gas safety and regulatory requirements. The Compliance Team will also be strengthened by the presence of our surveyors, who will continue to play a crucial role in property inspections, maintenance, and improvements.



Meet the Team

Under the leadership of our Director of Homes, Tina Warren, the new structured teams are committed to ensuring that our services are of the highest quality. The team members are:



Tina Warren, Director of Homes

Tina leads the Property Services team, and has a focus on delivering results for our tenants to ensure they're receiving the best possible service. With years of experience, Tina's leadership is instrumental to our team's ability to carry out their duties effectively.



Mark Whitehead, Contracts Manager

Mark is responsible for managing our team of surveyors, as well as overseeing some of our contractors, such as Mark Walkers and Fosters.



Surveyors

Our surveyors play an essential role in identifying issues in our homes to ensure that they're maintained to the highest standards for our tenants. Our surveyor team comprises of Terry Ray and Dale Frary, as well as our Trainee Surveyor, Charlie Staines.



Bryan Padley, Assets Manager

Bryan, who joined CHS Group in August 2024, manages all of our asset-related functions. Through his work, Bryan ensures that our homes are well maintained and their value is preserved over time.

Thanks to these structural changes, we believe that our Property Service team is well placed to deliver quality services that meet the needs of all of our tenants. We are excited about the future, and we're confident that these changes will bring about continued success and positive outcomes for everyone living in our homes.



Mel Bennett, Compliance Manager

Mel heads our newly formed Compliance Team, which will focus on maintaining compliance with all relevant regulations. By working closely with our heating and electrical contractor, Sureserve Compliance (formerly Aaron Services Ltd), Mel ensures that safety standards, including gas and other essential services, are met.



Yanne Loveday, Performance and Quality Manager

Yanne recently joined CHS Group in September 2024, and is focused on overseeing the performance and quality of services that we deliver. Yanne's role is to drive continuous improvements in our complaints handling and will work closely with the contracts manager and our contractors to ensure that repairs are adequately handled.



Lauren Dixon, Performance and Quality Officer

Lauren will work alongside Yanne to monitor and enhance our service delivery. Lauren will also be supporting Yanne in all repairs and complaints related matters.



Tina Parsley and Stephanie Williamson, Performance and Quality Officers

Tina and Stephanie will be working with Mel Bennett, our Compliance Manager, to ensure that our compliance standards are being met. They will also provide Mel with their invaluable support in all compliance related matters.

First look at Aaron Services' rebrand

As we mentioned in our previous newsletter, our gas and electrical contractor, Aaron Services Ltd, is undergoing a rebrand and has now changed its name to Sureserve Compliance Centre Ltd with immediate effect.

When visiting your home, Sureserve Compliance Centre Ltd staff will be dressed in new Sureserve branded uniform and relevant Personal Protective Equipment. They will also be wearing a clearly visible ID that shows their name, photo, company name and telephone number. This will always be shown to you at the introduction stage.



Remember to always ask to see any contractors ID badge before letting them into your home

Do we know your next of kin?

Nobody likes to think about what might happen after we pass away. However, having our affairs in order can make it easier on our loved ones.

If you pass away without a will, and/or if CHS Group don't know who you want us to speak to about practical arrangements, then it can make it complex for your friends and family. For example, if we don't know your next of kin, it may be difficult for them to recover valued or sentimental possessions and paperwork from your home. By working together, CHS can help ensure that matters are handled with sensitivity without legal hurdles.



We're happy to keep a record of your next of kin. If you would like us to hold that information, call us or email us at: info@chsgroup.org.uk

Have you tried our online customer portal?



Have you tried out myCHS, our online customer portal? If you do, you will be able to access information and make requests 24/7. You can:

- Check your rent account balance, transactions and charges
- Report a new repair
- View the details we have about your household and let us know what's changed
- Use a link to Allpay to make a payment
- Find advice about emergency repairs
- Look up what repairs have already been ordered for your home
- Submit requests for CHS to contact you

To register for myCHS, visit our website, www.chsgroup.org.uk, and click on the 'Log in to myCHS' icon.

When you first log in, you will need to provide your date of birth and your six-digit tenancy number to complete the registration. Once you have registered, you will need to create a password and will receive an email to confirm your registration. Contact us on [0300 111 3555](tel:03001113555) or email info@chsgroup.org.uk if you don't know your tenancy number.

Should you need any support, you can email us on info@chsgroup.org.uk or call us on [0300 111 3555](tel:03001113555). Alternatively, you can read our FAQs on our website at <https://www.chsgroup.org.uk/chs-group-home-page/my-chs/>.

Do you have home contents insurance?

As your landlord, we cover the building insurance for your home. However, under the terms of your tenancy, you are responsible for insuring your contents. Home content insurance can help protect your possessions from risks like fire, theft and water damage, along with the damage caused to your home by the weather. Although it isn't compulsory, it's important to consider.

Thistle Tenant Risks and Great Lakes Insurance UK Ltd offer the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme, which is designed for residents in social housing. This policy can cover:

- Furniture
- Carpets
- Curtains
- Clothes
- Bedding
- Electrical items
- Pictures
- Ornaments



It's now easier than ever for you to sign up to the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme through the My Home online platform. You can now purchase your home contents policy online when paying via direct debit.

For more details or to get started, you have a few options:

Call Thistle Tenant Risks: [0345 450 7288](tel:03454507288)

Visit the website: www.thistlemyhome.co.uk

Request a call back here www.thistlemyhome.co.uk/call-back



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For more help and guidance or to check your rent account and raise repairs, don't forget to log into [myCHS](#).

We'd also love to hear your thoughts on our newsletter.
To get in touch, email: info@chsgroup.org.uk.

