



**CHS GROUP**  
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire



## June Newsletter

Welcome to our June tenant newsletter! This month, we give an update on our upcoming safety checks, introduce our new heating and electrical maintenance provider, and share the news that a key member of the CHS team is retiring. **Read on to find out more...**

### Safety checks in your homes

As your landlord, we're required by law to undertake electric safety inspections in your homes every five years. These inspections are called an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR), and helps ensure that you, our tenants, and your neighbours stay safe.

Here are some of the things you can do to reduce the risk of fire or injury from an electrical fault:

- Do not make any alterations to the wiring, sockets or light fittings in your home. If you'd like to make any changes, please speak to us about it first
- Switch off all appliances when you are not using them
- When buying electrical appliances, always try to buy one with a CE marking as this verifies that it meets safety standards. Counterfeit goods are the leading source of electrical shocks and fires
- Remember water and electricity do not mix! Keep devices away from water and do not touch with wet hands
- Keep cables secure and any unused cables tidy
- Try not to overload your sockets or extension leads where possible, and if you do, make sure not to run them through doorways, ceilings or floors
- Always try to charge battery operated items like e-scooters, laptops, mobile phones during the day



If you're concerned about the safety of any aspect of your home, **please give us a call on 0300 1113555**

# Please keep to your appointments

If your home is due an electrical inspection, you'll receive a letter from our contractor, Aaron Services, with the time and date of when they would like to visit your home to carry out testing and inspections. These tests take around 2-3 hours and we only ask that you make sure that your sockets are not cluttered so that they can be tested easily. You are only required to do this once every five years and it is important for your safety.

We currently have less than 60 properties that need an EICR and we are working hard with Aaron Services to reduce this. That's why we're asking all tenants to please ensure you keep the appointment time sent to you by Aaron Services.

If you can't make the appointment, please contact Aaron Services on the number provided in the letter you received, to make a new appointment.



## Heating and gas checks

At CHS, it's vital to us that your home is safe. To ensure this, we will check your heating appliances and gas supply pipe each year.

It is important to keep your heating servicing appointments so that we can ensure it is in good working order and that any repairs are identified. If you can't make the appointment, please contact Aaron Services to re-arrange for a more suitable time on [01205 353363](tel:01205353363).

It's also a good idea to keep an eye on your gas boiler between your annual gas servicing checks and report any problems to Aaron Services.

## To ensure your home remains gas safe:

- If you smell gas, open all doors and windows, leave your home, then call the National Gas Emergencies 24/7 freephone number [0800 111 999](tel:0800111999) to report it. Only use a mobile phone from outside the property.



If you notice a problem with it, there's no need to wait for your annual checks. Please call us directly on [0300 1113555](tel:03001113555) (option 3).

- If you think a gas appliance may be faulty, do not use it
- Never cover appliances or block air vents or outside flues
- Do not store bottled gas in your home

# £22.7 billion

## in unclaimed benefits - don't miss out!

In our January newsletter, we shared details on the number of benefits that were being unclaimed by the very people they were intended for. In the latest figures, sadly, the total figure has risen from £19 billion to £22.7 billion.

### There are three main reasons why benefits go unclaimed:

#### Lack of awareness:

Many claimants are simply unaware that certain benefits exist or assume they will not be eligible

#### Complexity:

Having to apply for half a dozen different benefits, navigating complex criteria, and proving eligibility are all barriers to claiming

#### Stigma:

Negative perceptions around claiming benefits discourage eligible people from engaging with the benefit system



## £22.7 billion estimated unclaimed value by benefit, April 2024

DWP/HMRC Benefits	£ Million	Missed claims	Average/Claim
Universal Credit	£8,306	1,439,019	£5,772
Pension Credit	£2,162	807,704	£2,677
Carers Allowance	£2,254	529,306	£4,259
Child Benefit	£1,652	838,291	£1,970

Locally Administered Benefits	£ Million	Missed claims	Average/Claim
Council Tax Support	£3,411	2,254,099	£1,513
Housing Benefit (Pension age)	£1,274	293,646	£4,338
Free School meals	£231	471,069	£490
Healthy Start	£132	181,255	£726

Social Tariffs and Energy Support	£ Million	Missed claims	Average/Claim
Water social tariffs	£974	6,088,693	£160
Broadband social tariffs	£1,680	8,401,802	£200
Warm Home Discount	£384	181,255	£726
TV Licences	£249	1,470,966	£170

<b>Total</b>	<b>£22,709</b>	<b>8,401,802</b>	<b>£2,703</b>
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## Don't miss out:

Check if you're eligible for any welfare benefits by using the benefit calculator: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

## Our Money Matters team are here to help:

- Our Money Matters team pro-actively contact all of our new general needs tenants by automated email and text message to offer help with grants for white goods, household items and benefit advice
- They also offer support with applying for welfare benefits, disability benefits, grants etc. through phone calls, emails, texts, and home visits

Last year, we supported over 400 tenants to claim £435,000 in welfare benefits and grants. The last feedback we received shows that you, our tenants, are very satisfied with this service, are less anxious and worried about finances and are coping better as a result. Our team has been able to support single parents, single people, and people with disabilities, amongst others.

## How to contact our dedicated Money Matters team:

- For information, advice or support please email: [moneyadvice@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:moneyadvice@chsgroup.org.uk)
- Or phone our Customer Services team: [0300 111 3555](tel:03001113555)

Please provide your contact details and a brief description of the issue, and a Money Matters Advisor will contact you to see how we can help.



## Meet Aaron Services

We're delighted to introduce Aaron Services Ltd who recently won the contract to maintain our Heating and Electrical works for the next eight years.

With over 38 years' experience, Aaron Services is a multi-faceted, specialist heating and hot water contractor. In total, the team works in more than 200,000 domestic and commercial public sector properties every year.

Working for CHS, Aaron Services will undertake our domestic and communal heating servicing and repairs, alongside electrical installation condition reports.

Keith Taylor, Aaron Services Operations Director, said:

***"We're delighted to expand our existing relationship with Cambridge Housing Society (CHS) and provide excellent services to their customers."***

The local, dedicated 24/7 in-house teams comprise of maintenance and service engineers, qualified in all fuel types including gas, oil, solid fuel and renewable technologies; complemented by a team of electricians and multi-skilled tradespeople. The managers include:

**Richard Manning,  
Head of Operations**

Has over 21 years' industry experience and will be responsible for delivering our domestic heating requirements.

**Richard Noe,  
Electrical Qualifying Manager**

Has over 28 years' industry experience and will be responsible for delivering our electrical testing requirements.

**David Stott,  
Head of Commercial**

Has over 30 years' industry experience and will be responsible for delivering our commercial heating requirements.

## Meet your resident liaison officer - Connor Reed

Connor Reed is the CHS Assistant Regional Liaison Officer at Aaron Services and will be booking your appointments for Heating Servicing, as well as updating you if there are any changes to your appointments.

***CHS' Director of Homes, Tina Warren said: "Aaron Services has a proven track record of successfully delivering heating and electrical services across Cambridgeshire, and already service and maintain CHS' communal heating systems. I hope all our tenants will welcome this appointment and look forward to engaging with Aaron Services."***

To find out more about Aaron Services you can visit the website: [www.aaronservices.co.uk](http://www.aaronservices.co.uk)

# Announcing the new consumer standards for social housing

CHS is regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing, a government body which sets the consumer standards that we must follow. From 1st April, these standards have been updated with the aim of helping to drive improvements in social housing and the services we offer. The regulator worked with tenants and landlords to finalise these new standards that we will be accountable for.

The new consumer standards set expectations on how we should offer good quality homes and services and build a stronger relationship with tenants. The aim is to:

- Maintain your home so it is safe and to a decent standard, and provide quality services
- Handle complaints effectively when things go wrong
- Listen to you and support you to influence decisions
- Have shared expectations with you about fairness and respect, rights and responsibilities
- Show we understand the diverse needs of the communities we serve and demonstrate this in our services



For the first time, every social landlord, including CHS, will publish Tenant Satisfaction Measures, and in future you will be able to see how we compare to other landlords. These measures include the feedback you give us in our annual surveys, building safety, repairs measures and our complaint handling.

CHS has already been given the top rating (G1 and V1) from the regulator for our governance and financial viability. There is now a rating for the new consumer standards which will be assessed when we under go our next inspection. We will be aiming for the highest rating (C1) as we want to ensure that we fully meet the consumer standards. These new standards fall under the following headings:



- Neighbourhood & Community
- Safety & Quality
- Tenancy
- Transparency, Influence & Accountability

You can find out more about the new Consumer Standards here:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords)

## Thank you and all the best Sue!

Sue Reynolds joined CHS on 1 September 1998 and will be retiring at the end of July after almost 26 years. Her first role was co-ordinating the New Horizons Saving and Loan Scheme, which was a partnership with Cambridge Building Society. Over the years, her role changed, and she managed more and more people, including our Money Matters and Training Matters teams. Through her work, Sue has helped put CHS on the map in Cambridgeshire by co-ordinating the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Financial Capability Forum, with over 200 members including local government bodies, community and voluntary organisations, and other housing associations.

The feedback we receive about Sue and her team is always great, and it is no accident that we have received national recognition while she was a key part of our team, winning the National Housing Federation's very first overall award for housing associations which went the extra mile.

Sue and her team always strive to assist our tenants in the best way possible. Those of you who have received her support will know how dedicated, tenacious and diligent she is.

If you would like to send Sue any messages, please email us: [info@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@chsgroup.org.uk). Alternatively, you can write to us at Endurance House, Chivers Way, Histon, Cambridge, CB24 9ZR. Whatever you send, please mark your message as 'Sue Reynolds message', and we will collate them and pass them on to her.

We will continue to provide a Money Matters Service and will update you on it in the next issue of this newsletter.



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## Our new gas inspectors - Phoenix Compliancy Management

We aim to deliver services that exceed our tenants' expectations to ensure that all of our homes are high quality and safe. We have recently appointed Phoenix Compliancy Management (PCM) to carry out quality control checks for gas servicing, repairs, installation and replacement of gas boilers and other heating systems. These services were previously carried out by Morgan Lambert.

Over the coming months, you may be contacted by PCM to arrange an appointment for tests to be carried out on your heating system. On their arrival, the engineer will identify themselves with their PCM ID card and will spend up to 30 minutes carrying out an inspection, and checking that all the work that was recently carried out was completed adequately.

All the PCM engineers are registered with Gas Safe and always carry their Gas Safe card.



If you have any questions, you can contact PCM directly by:

- Calling: [01322 224200](tel:01322224200)
- Emailing: [info@pcm.co.com](mailto:info@pcm.co.com)
- Visiting the website: [www.pcm.co.com](http://www.pcm.co.com)

Alternatively, you can contact our P&Q (Performance and Quality) team by calling [0300 1113555](tel:03001113555)



## 24/7 access and support



Have you tried the myCHS online customer portal? You are able to access information and make requests 24/7. Through the portal, you can:

- Check your rent account balance, transactions and charges
- Use a link to Allpay to make a payment
- View the details we have about your household and let us know what's changed
- Report a new repair
- 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 the CHS website: [www.chsgroup.org.uk](http://www.chsgroup.org.uk). From the website, click on the myCHS icon, where you will have the choice to register on the login screen. To register, you will need to provide your date of birth and your six-digit tenancy number.

If you get stuck, there are some FAQs on our website, or you can call us for guidance on [0300 111 3555](tel:03001113555).

Once registered, you will need to create a password. After your password is set, you will receive an email to verify your account which will complete the process.

Finally, if you have comments about how you are finding the portal, please do get in touch: [info@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@chsgroup.org.uk)

## Repairs, void and planned work contract procurement

One of the most extensive services we provide to you is our repairs and planned maintenance service, which is currently delivered by Foster Property Management (FPM). Our contract with Foster comes to an end in April 2025 and so we have started the formal process of re-procuring the service contract.

To ensure that we have enough time to prepare the detailed tender documents, we start the process of procurement 12 months before the current contract ends. Therefore, back in April this year, we started talking to our engaged tenants through working groups and our CHS Feedback Panel to get their thoughts about which areas of the current service work well and those that require improvement.

We have also consulted with our shared owners through the formal S20 consultation process and have spoken to our staff about their experiences based on the feedback

they have received from customers on a day-to-day basis. All the responses we have received will be fed into the tender process.

We published the first stage of the tender on 7th June and invited prospective contractors to make a submission. We won't know the outcome of who has been awarded the new contract until January 2025 and the new contract will officially start on 1st April 2025. We will regularly share updates with our Tenant Committee members and will inform all of our tenants of the outcome of the tender process in January 2025.

In the meantime, if you would like to join our CHS Feedback Panel and share your thoughts about CHS and the services we offer to help us understand what matters most to you, please contact our Customer Engagement Officer, Laura Papanikolaou: [lpap@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:lpap@chsgroup.org.uk) / [07540 122624](tel:07540122624).

# Our garden competition is now open!

Finally, our garden competition is now open and we're inviting you to send in photos of your garden. But be quick, the deadline is 31st August, and if you win, you could take home a **£50 shopping voucher**. To share your snaps, email [lpap@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:lpap@chsgroup.org.uk) or post to:

Laura Papanikolaou  
Endurance House  
Chivers Way  
Histon  
Cambridge  
CB24 9ZR



For more help and guidance, 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](mailto:info@chsgroup.org.uk).

