



CHS HAS A NEW GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR

CHS has appointed Mark Walker Grounds Maintenance Ltd (MWGM) as the new grounds maintenance contractor. They started working with us on 1st November 2021. The contract will last until November 2025.

MWGM has been established since 1984 and are based in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. They have extensive experience of managing multi-site contracts and currently deliver to other Housing Associations, Essex & Kent Police, The NHS Foundation Trust, and other large organisations in the East of England. The company is a member of the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) and has won a National Principal Award in Grounds Maintenance.

MWGM are committed to continual improvement and have highly experienced grounds maintenance teams who will deliver these services to CHS sites. The schedule of site visits is available on their website – www.markwalkergm.co.uk and on the CHS website Gardening - information about the service CHS Group delivers. This schedule is being regularly updated by MWGM to reflect any changes.

CHS GROUP APPOINTS A NEW CHAIR OF THE BOARD.

Heidi Allen, former Member of Parliament for South Cambridgeshire and a Trustee of the charity Feeding Britain and a policy committee member for the Child Poverty Action Group, brings a range of expertise to CHS. With her strong local and national networks, Heidi is a valuable asset in supporting the organisation's mission to provide affordable housing and community support services across Cambridgeshire. As the new Chair, Heidi Allen will oversee the CHS Group Board and its responsibility to its residents and to meet the standards of the Regulator of Social Housing, while being transparent and accountable for the delivery of the organisation's social housing objectives. Heidi is highly regarded in Cambridgeshire for her public policy work, notably her campaigning against the £20 Universal Credit cut this autumn.

Heidi comments: *"I am extremely proud to have been chosen as the next Chair of CHS Group's Board. The services that CHS Group delivers day in day out make the most incredible difference to so many lives and, working*

MWGM have been carrying out a winter works programme to bring sites back to standard before the growing season starts. They have identified some areas that need additional work over this period, and this is included in their schedule.

The current feedback mechanisms remain in place, so that we can monitor satisfaction with the new service. In the first two months of the contract, customer satisfaction has improved from 54% to 83% - a very promising start and CHS will continue to work with MWGM to make sure this is maintained and improved. There will be some increases in service charges for the new contract – for many sites, this will bring the costs back to previous levels from 4 years ago – though with a much improved delivery of service.

You can report any issues with the delivery of this service directly to MWGM:

- By phone to **0333 220 5485**
- By e-mail to a shared in-box - **office@markwalkergm.co.uk**
- Live chat - **www.markwalkergm.co.uk**

MWGM will respond to queries they receive within 24 hours either with a proposed resolution or a timescale to give you an update. Any issues or complaints reported to the grounds maintenance team while they are working onsite will be reported to their Contracts Manager by mobile phone. The Contracts Manager will assess the situation and issue instructions on the best course of action and update CHS accordingly.

Further updates will be provided through the CHS website and Newsletter – please continue to provide feedback so that we can continue to monitor satisfaction and make changes/improvements to service delivery when required.



with Nigel Howlett, the Chief Executive, the rest of the Board and the team at CHS, I will do everything I can to support CHS Group with its ongoing efforts."

Heidi took over from Nicola Scrivings, who had been Chair of CHS Group since 2013. Nicola has contributed greatly to CHS Group's growth and vision over the past eight years.

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Nigel's message

Nigel Howlett Chief Executive of CHS



In the run up to Christmas with the emergence of the Omicron variant, we had real concerns about our ability to maintain services, particularly in social care. It's been an incredibly difficult and demanding time for all of our care colleagues to support our residents while so many people were ill or self-isolating. In other services we've seen less impact than we feared in terms of staff being available to work. Hopefully we have reached the peak of Omicron and the risk to services not being available will start to decline. We have just about survived although it has been very stressful for our Care staff.

However as I write this the Covid rates in Cambridgeshire remain high so take whatever precautions you need to keep yourselves, your families and your friends safe.

CHS regularly reviews the position across our services to see whether we need to take any further action. This newsletter contains our annual report to you and you'll see that we

haven't met some of our service targets. Much of this is due to Covid, for example we haven't built as many new affordable homes as we planned, mostly because developers stopped building their and our new homes for parts of the pandemic. But we have taken action where services were weak for other reasons, for example we have appointed a new grounds maintenance contractor.

We are going through the process at the moment of agreeing a budget for the next financial year starting in April. Like all of us, CHS is facing high cost increases, including with building materials and energy costs. It is also getting harder to recruit colleagues with the skills we need to provide the services you want. Over the next year we will be working hard in a number of areas including further costing and planning to reduce carbon emissions from your homes and our services and also implementing the new requirements on building safety.

A note about rent levels

As you probably know CHS rents change in April each year. Our rent levels are set in line with a clear framework set by the government's social housing regulator, and this includes the maximum amount by which rents can increase each year. After four years of reducing rents by 1% per year from 2016, CHS rents began to increase each year from April 2020, and the rate of increase was the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) plus an additional 1%. In April 2022 the same formula will lead to a maximum rent increase of 4.1% as the rate of CPI in September 2021 was 3.1%.

CHS is very conscious of the financial pressures on households in general and especially this year; we thought hard about whether to apply the permitted rent increase of 4.1% in full next April. We know that many of you have struggled financially during the pandemic, and that living costs including energy and national insurance are increasing at the same time as the Universal Credit uplift has been scrapped.

After four years of reducing rents CHS' rent levels are now at around the same level as they were in April 2015. This has led to significant pressure on our ability to maintain current services and invest in your homes. We are also facing very significant cost increases for a range of things including building materials and energy. Therefore we have reluctantly decided that we need to apply the rent increase of 4.1% in full this April to help meet these current and future costs.

If you claim Universal Credit we will remind you this March to update your Journal with the new rent figures, so that your Universal Credit can be re-calculated. As always our Money Matters team are on hand to advise you if you're struggling financially or need some guidance on claiming what you are entitled to – **just contact our Customer Services team.**



This year's first prize goes to a group of residents at St Andrews Glebe who have looked after the flowerpots at the front of their building to create a welcoming flower display as people approach the residence.





New Horizons provides coaching around money, employment and digital skills

Six million people have been affected by the removal of the Universal Credit £20 uplift in October 2021. The effect of these changes has been compounded by the weather getting colder, higher energy charges and rising living costs, all of which have left many of us struggling to make ends meet.

At CHS, we have been running the New Horizons Project for 5 years now, helping people make their money go further, reduce their outgoings and ensuring that they are receiving all the financial support they are entitled to.

The project provides one to one coaching around money, employment and digital skills – adapting the coaching to what is important to each individual.

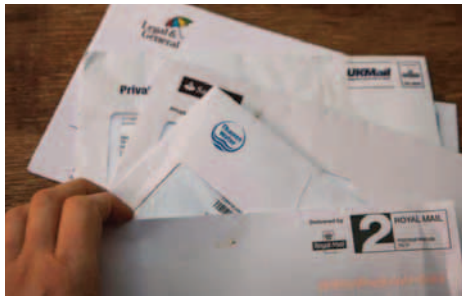
Our coaches have helped people get the confidence to challenge their bills and negotiate reductions. They have sat alongside people to help them address unopened bills and get things sorted. The project can cover expenses like applying for a dept relief order (DROs) or requesting a copy of a birth certificate to help people get back on track.

Coaches provide support in your home or somewhere local to you and can pay for travel expenses and any childcare costs you may spend in order to meet with them. We can also arrange some virtual and over the phone contact if this better suits you.

New Horizons coaching is available to anyone living in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Norfolk who are not currently in paid work.

We welcome anyone who is not working, struggling with money and would like to meet with a coach to get things sorted, to get in touch using the online form: <https://www.chsgroup.org.uk/new-horizons-referral/> or by calling CHS on **0300 111 3555** to arrange a call back.

New Horizons is part of the Building Better Opportunities Project funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund.



The CHS Money Matters team can help with:

- Checking your Benefits
- Filling in Disability Benefit forms (home visits)
- Increasing income and reducing expenditure
- Dealing with Debt
- Applying for Charity grants
- The Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS)
- Food Banks in Cambridgeshire
- Access to re-cycled furniture and white goods

For further information please contact the Money Matters Team:

Email: moneyadvice@chsgroup.org.uk
 Phone: 0300 111 3555
<https://www.chsgroup.org.uk/support-advice/do-you-need-our-help/>

Useful websites for self-help:

Food Banks & Food Hubs:

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/>
<https://cambridgesustainablefood.org/>

Benefit checker and charity finder:

Turn2Us

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice - National website:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Cambridge & South Cambs.:

<https://www.cambridgecab.org.uk/>

Fenland, Hunts & East Cambs.:

<https://www.citizensadvice.ruralcambs.org.uk/>

Information on Money and Finances:

Making Money Count

<http://makingmoneycount.org.uk/>

The Money and Pensions Service

<https://moneyandpensions.service.org.uk/>

Money Saving Expert

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/>

Are you struggling with your finances?

- Has your Universal Credit gone down by £20 a week?
- Have your gas and electricity costs gone up?
- Are you worried about your food bills?
- Do you need help with filling in your benefit forms (DLA, PIP, AA, ESA 50, UC 50)?
- Do you need a Benefit check?



CAMBRIDGE & SOUTH STAFFS WATER'S 'ASSURE' TARIFF

If your total household income is less than £16,480 per year, you may qualify for the assure tariff, a discount on your water charge. If you are eligible and your application is successful, your charges will be discounted for two years, in the first year by 60% and the second year by 40%. If you have a dependent child living at your address, an additional allowance of £1,500 per child may be added to the household income threshold amount of £16,480 per year.

We do not take into consideration income received from the following benefits:

- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Carer's Allowance
- The disabled child or severely disabled child element of Child Tax Credit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Housing Benefit or Housing Element of Universal Credit
- Council Tax Benefit

If someone in your household receives pension credit guarantee element, you will qualify for the assure tariff.

Please contact Simon Pearce, Community engagement coordinator for Cambridge Water, on **07425425855** or simonpearce@south-staffs-water.co.uk for more information.

Postcodes covered by **Cambridge & South Staffs Water**: CB1 to CB5 (city of Cambridge), CB21, CB22, CB23, CB24, PE26, PE27, PE28, SG8, SG19

How to get the most from your heating.

Gas and oil central heating

Using your central heating system efficiently means that you can get the best out of the system for the least cost. To do this you need to know how to work the heating controls. Your heating system will have some or all of the following controls:

1. Boiler thermostat – Found on the boiler itself. Controls the temperature of the hot water flowing around the pipes to the radiators. Thermostat should be $\frac{3}{4}$ to max. This may be on a number scale, or temperature of around 70°C.

2. Room thermostat – Found in the hallway or living room. It controls the temperature of the whole of the home based on the room it is in. Correct setting is 21°C - 23°C for pensioners and families with young children, between 18°C - 21°C for everyone else. Note - turning up the room thermostat will not heat the room up faster, it will eventually make the room hotter. Every degree that you turn it down could save you around £65 a year on your heating bill.

3. Cylinder thermostat – Found on the hot water tank, it controls the temperature of the hot water coming out of the taps. Correct setting is 60°C or 140°F. The tank needs to heat to at least 55°C once a day to kill any bacteria in the water (*Legionella*).

4. Radiator thermostat – Found on the radiator itself, it allows you to have different temperatures in each room. Start of at a middle setting and turn down a notch if too warm and up a notch if too cool.

5. Programmer – Controls the times you want the heating and hot water to switch on and off. Tip - set it to come on half an hour before you get up or come in and switch off half hour before you go out or go to bed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: Is it best if I have my gas/oil central heating on low all over the home or high in the rooms I am using?

A: It is best to have the heating on low all over the house AND high in the rooms you are using but you will need to read your meters and check your consumption regularly so you know how much fuel you are using.

Q: What does the OVERRIDE/ADVANCE button do on my programmer?

A: If you come in at 2pm feeling chilly, pressing the override button will bring the heating on and it will go off at its normal time set in the evening. If the heating is on, pressing the override will switch it off and it will come back on at the next time set. The same applies for hot water.

Q: What does the 'ONCE' button do on my programmer?

A: Your heating/hot water will come on for one period in the day - coming on at the first time set and switching off at the last time set.

Q: Why does the boiler keep firing on and off?

A: The boiler will only fire up when your heating and/or hot water is on. The 'flaring up' will stop when your home is warm enough.

Q: Should I keep the heating on all the time?

A: If you leave your heating on 24/7, you will typically end up using more fuel than programming your system to come on at certain times of the day. When you use your boiler timer and room thermostat in combination with radiator temperature controls (TRVs), you really do have the most energy-efficient approach to heating your home.

Top tip – During the summer the boiler will generally be used for hot water only, the heating system sits there dormant, and some parts can seize through lack of use. To prevent the “breakdown” at the first cold weekend of the autumn, try running the heating for an hour every third week. This keeps everything lubricated and less prone to failure.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR AIR SOURCE (HEAT PUMP) CENTRAL HEATING

Air Source heating works at a lower temperature than gas/oil systems. The fluid in the pipework and radiators is around 45°C (as opposed to 70°C). The systems are designed with larger output radiators to reflect this. Air Source heating is not as responsive as gas/oil heating and so keeping the home at a constant temperature suits these systems better. Aim for 15°C room temperature when not in use, lifting to 18 to 21°C for when the rooms are in use. The rest of the information for gas/oil then applies.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR ELECTRIC HEATING

Storage heaters might have just one control or separate input and output controls. The Input/Charge control sets the amount of heat that can be stored in the heater. The heater is charged overnight and stores heat in heat-retaining bricks, which is then released slowly over the day. The input dial controls the charging of the bricks. If the dial is marked 1-9 and you set it at 3, 30% of the bricks will be charged. The higher the setting (normally 1-9), the greater the amount of heat stored, and the more energy you'll use. We recommend that you set the Input control at a level that gives you enough heat to keep you comfortable and helps keep control of your costs. The Output/Boost control lets you manage the amount of heat that the heater gives out during the day. There are several good guides on YouTube on how to set the controls of storage heaters.

Electric panel heaters don't just charge during periods when electricity is cheaper. To keep costs as low as possible, always try to heat your home when it's cheaper for you. Be aware of the power rating of your heaters – the higher the rating the higher the cost to use. Use any timer or thermostatic controls supplied with your system.

PREVENTING CONDENSATION AND MOULD GROWTH

Why condensation occurs: Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface. The risk of condensation depends on how moist the air is, and how cold the surfaces in the rooms are. Both depend to some extent on how the building is used.

When condensation occurs: Condensation usually occurs in winter because the building structure is cold and because windows are opened less often, and warmer moist air cannot escape.

Where condensation occurs: Condensation often occurs for short periods in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere, and quite frequently for long periods in unheated bedrooms, in cupboards or corners of the room; or behind large items of furniture, where movement of air is restricted. Besides condensation on visible surfaces, damage can occur in areas which are out of sight, for example under suspended timber floors and in roofs.

HOW TO REDUCE CONDENSATION

1. Reduce the moisture content of room air

After bathing, keep the bathroom window open, and shut the door for long enough to dry the room.

2. Provide some ventilation

All that is needed is a slightly opened window or ventilator (where there is a choice), open the upper part of a window - a 10mm gap will be sufficient.

3. Provide reasonable heating

During cold weather maintain all rooms at not less than 10°C to avoid condensation. When rooms are in use, their temperature should be raised to about 20°C.

Any sign of mould growth is an indication of the presence of moisture, and if caused by condensation, this gives warning that heating, structural insulation or ventilation may require improvement.



HOW TO REMOVE MOULD

If you notice mould forming in an area, treat the area with an ant-fungal solution, available from most supermarkets or DIY stores. Follow the directions on the container. Follow this up by wiping the area every few days to remove any condensation that has formed, this is best done with paper towels which should then be removed from the home to a bin (removing the moisture from the property).

Increase
in energy
costs

Do you pay a service charge to CHS for your heating and hot water? This charge will be for the cost of the gas supply. As gas prices have soared over the past few months, CHS has been working to obtain the best deal possible from 1 April 2022. Unfortunately, our existing supplier went out of business in November, so a new supply contract was put in place from 1 December 2021 on the best available contract rate at that time. This contract guarantees the same rate for the next three years – though it does mean an increase of approximately 80% on the previous rates. The alternative options were more expensive, and the non-contract rate would have been an increase of over 200% which would not have been fixed.

A message from Arthurs Shed

Arthurs Shed is a community hub based in the grounds of the Arthur Rank Hospice in Cambridge. The activities are open to all and are led by volunteers. Arthurs Shed is now up and running again and we warmly welcome you to attend our sessions which are free of charge and open to the public. These include Astronomy, Card Making and Paper Crafts and are run by skilled volunteers. The Shed is wheelchair accessible, and we encourage you to share any adaptations you may require to support your needs in advance, both physical and emotional.

To find out more or contact us please head to <https://www.arhc.org.uk/open-to-all/arthurs-shed/>, Arthurs.shed@arhc.org.uk or 01223 675871.



Looking for Work or know of someone who is?

CHS GROUP
Housing, care, and community services in Cambridge

We currently have a number of full-time and part-time permanent positions available

Care homes in Cambridge CB4

Housekeeper

Day and Night Care Assistant

Casual Relief Day Care Assistant



Housing with Care

Catering Assistant—Cambridge CB1, CB4 and
Melbourn

Homecare Team Leader—Cambridge CB1 & CB4

Homecare Assistant— Cambridge CB1, CB4 and
Melbourn



Sunflower Nursery in Cambourne

Early Years Group Leader

Early Years Educator

Early Years Teacher



If any of these positions sounds appealing, visit our website for full details of all our current vacancies, benefits and how to apply.

If you would like an informal chat about working for CHS, then please call **Dawn Bozok**, HR Advisor on **07921 234843** or e-mail recruitment@chsgroup.org.uk and a member of our friendly HR Team will be happy to help you. Please note applications are subject to a clear Enhanced DBS Disclosure



www.chsgroup.org.uk/work-for-us/current-vacancies

Scrutiny Panel reviews the role of Housing Officers

CHS values the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, whose work on previous projects has helped to identify savings and free up resources for other things, and to improve our services to you.

Recently the Tenant Scrutiny Panel did a review of the Housing Officer role. The members interviewed the Housing Team and the Customer Services Manager. Job descriptions were compared to those at other organisations. The report found that the Housing team had experienced a significant rise in anti-social behaviour cases and domestic abuse cases since the start of the pandemic. The report recommended improving communication between departments and consistent recording of information on the housing management IT system so that any staff helping customers have the relevant information. Other recommendations included updating job descriptions and providing further support and training for Housing Officers on dealing with anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse, which can be very challenging for both the staff and customers involved. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel intend to follow up this work by going out on site visits with Housing Officers, for example on estate inspections, once the easing of the pandemic allows. The Chair of the committee Jane Bird thanked the staff for their openness and cooperation in talking to panel members during a very unusual time.

In December Scrutiny members were invited to a Christmas dinner to thank them for their volunteering work.



How you can get involved

Would you like to review an aspect of CHS services with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to identify potential improvements? You could help make services to tenants better.

If you would like to attend a meeting to find out more, or you have a suggestion for an area that needs investigation, please contact the Customer Involvement Officer, Laura Papanikolaou, lpap@chsgroup.org.uk, 07540 122624. Panel Chair Jane Bird is also always willing to chat to tenants who are interested in getting involved, and there is training available.



Neighbourhood grant brings festive cheer to St Andrews Glebe residents

The St Andrews Glebe social committee received a neighbourhood grant for a Christmas party. The residents enjoyed Christmas food and entertainment from a singer, John Woodhouse and they all had a lovely time. Barnabas Court and Ellis House also received grants for Christmas parties but they decided to postpone them until the situation with the pandemic improves.



A word from the Chair of the Tenant Committee

Did you know that as a Tenant or Shared Owner you have the opportunity to improve the way CHS interacts with us to ensure our homes are safe and fit for purpose both now and into the future? I went along to my first Customer Committee as a guest and as I gained more interest, I joined both the Complaints Panel and Scrutiny Panel. I have been Chair of Tenant Committee (formerly Customer Committee) for the past year now, and I am so pleased that by working with CHS staff and other like-minded volunteers, I have made some brilliant friends and acquired a passion for the work.

Covid has changed all our lives and learning to use more technology such as Zoom, Teams, FaceTime for virtual meetings has been challenging, but keeping in touch with friends and colleagues has been essential to us all.

I was pleased to have been involved with the appointment of a new CHS Board Chair, Heidi Allen, and our new gardening contractors, Mark Walker Grounds Maintenance. I have been in meetings with some of our contractors like Fosters, Gasway, attended meetings with other Housing Associations, engaged with a number of CHS staff and built up a very strong relationship with the Chairs of both Scrutiny Panel (Jane Bird) and Complaints Panel (Trish Laver). Thank you ladies for your continued support.

If, like me, you have an interest in where and how we live and are keen to be involved in helping shape CHS, then we would love to hear from you. Volunteering is an opportunity to engage with others who share a common goal, have fun, gain lots of useful information and make friends along the way.

For more information or a brief chat please contact Laura Papanikolaou, 07540 122624, laura.papanikolaou@chsgroup.org.uk

Customer Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Introduction

Covid-19 has changed our entire operating environment and is expected to have long lasting and extensive implications. We have adapted by providing more digital self-service and improved mobile IT resources. During the year there was an increase in those needing more intensive support e.g. with hoarding and high fire safety risk, mental health crises, addiction. Covid appears to have exacerbated the pressures on many people with existing support needs and it has been more challenging to provide support remotely. Such support needs are expected to continue to grow and are very labour-intensive. Domestic Abuse helplines experienced an increase in demand during the year. We have continued to support survivors already known to us however the number of new cases has reduced compared to 2019/20. We are due for DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) re-accreditation and will need to review our practice. The removal of the Universal Credit (UC) uplift of £20 per week from October '21 and the end of the furlough scheme will further increase financial pressure on households. The Money Matters team and CLAS will remain important resources.

A new Social Housing White Paper is being introduced. The Regulator for Social Housing is setting out a proposed framework for tenant satisfaction measures.

The 23 draft measures overlap with much of what we measure now but we will need to update some of our surveys.

Customer Satisfaction Measures

Satisfaction of new tenants or shared owners with the lettings / moving in process: **92.3%**

Satisfaction with Anti-Social Behaviour case handling: **84.2%**

Satisfaction with last repair:
Foster **90%**
Gasway **91%**

Estate Services satisfaction **53%**

Formal Complaints – (9 property, 8 Housing management, 1 Development).

Total 18

In 19/20 there were 21 formal complaints.

Star Survey Results 2020-21

Every tenant or resident except those in care homes is asked to complete the survey every two years. **352** replies were received.



The results for the whole survey improved since the previous year, and covered the entire first year of the pandemic; many of you seemed to value the support we could provide during this challenging time. We can always learn from the reasons you give for any dissatisfaction, and this provided valuable insight. For example, you confirmed we needed to improve the gardening services, improve our complaints handling and develop more ways of communicating with you e.g. by email.

Value for Money performance against targets for 2021

		Target	Actual
Deliver sustainable growth in social and affordable housing			
Development handovers – affordable general needs	units	55	38
Development handovers – affordable shared ownership	units	33	11
Provide excellent services			
Tenants satisfied with CHS services	%	82.0	75
Reduce % of all staff who decide to leave within 6 months	%	30.0	31
Responsive repairs – stay fixed %	%	93.6	99.3
Responsive repairs – right first time %	%	78.0	97.1
Ensure financial viability and excellent governance			
Average responsive repair cost per property (exc voids)	£	496	505
Average void repair cost per relet	£	1440	864
Average relet days – general needs	days	16	27
Average relet days – sheltered	days	26	45
Average relet days – extra care	days	26	21
Average sales time for shared ownership units	days	86	194
Average sales time open market units	days	86	485
Open market sales - handovers	units	-	0
Average first let time for new affordable development handovers	days	13	18

Housing and Customer Services

Achievements since the last Annual report

62 new general needs and shared ownership homes were completed in the year – if this included you we hope you love your new home.

Call Handling – In March 2020 the ICT team delivered an online phone system very quickly that enabled the Customer Service team to answer all calls at home.

Adapting to Covid 19 – Home visits were largely suspended for the year. We changed the way we relet homes so people could still move safely for example we used electronic signatures for tenancy agreements, remote video pre-inspections and remote viewings. During the first lockdown the team contacted customers aged over 70 or with known health or support needs.

Rent Arrears – In April 2020 the average level of rent arrears was at around 2.8% and after the first lockdown it peaked at 3% in August 2020 and by the year-end it had reduced to 2.5%.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) - there was an increase of 47% in ASB cases, many due to disagreements or tensions during lockdown. One complaint was referred to the Housing Ombudsman who confirmed we had followed our procedures and demonstrated a fair and reasonable approach.

Business Intelligence – we established the new STAR survey with revised questions and continued to collect survey responses monthly.

Customer Involvement & Communication – we worked jointly with Tenant Committee and Panels to update policies including the Complaints Policy and Housing Ombudsman self-assessment. We supported the Scrutiny Panel in researching its project on the role of Housing Officers. We used the finding of a large-scale communication survey to evidence the demand of more online communication, and to inform the plan to improve Complaints Handling.

Mutual Exchanges and local connection – We negotiated with South Cambs District Council to permit households to exchange with others within the district who do not have a close local connection if unable to find a local household.

Complaints handling – We began working with other teams and the Independent Complaints Panel to improve satisfaction with complaints handling. We drafted a complaints handling guide, planned workshops, and improved reporting.

Where performance did not meet targets:

The average relet time of 27 days exceeded the target of 17 days. The first lockdown prevented many new tenants moving in promptly, and an additional 2 weeks was added to the void works timescale to allow empty periods before and after any works.

Our target to increase the use of direct debit, as this is more cost-effective, was not met as a significant number of you still prefer to use other Allpay methods such as debit card which allow ad-hoc payments.

Targets for 2021-22

- Review Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Domestic Abuse – plan for re-accreditation in 2022
- Learn from changed working practices to develop efficiencies e.g. digital communication, mobile working
- Transfer as many customers as possible to more cost-effective payment methods where this suits their circumstances
- Complaints – use internal Complaints team to develop good practice and consistent complaint handling alongside Complaints Panel - under way
- Develop the wider Customer Engagement Strategy to align with the Social Housing White Paper - we agreed a strategy with the Tenant Committee and an Action Plan is under way.

Property Services

Achievements since the last Annual report

Work Delivered for Customers

Responsive Repairs	7,387
Aids and Adaptations	46
Repairs to empty homes	261
Kitchen Replacements	58
Bathroom Replacements	55
External Door Replacements	117
Window Replacements	24 homes
Boiler Replacements	106
Communal Boiler Replacements	2 homes

- Even during the first lockdown we continued to deliver repairs and maintenance services as usual, both emergencies and routine repairs.
- Customer satisfaction with repairs and maintenance was at 90%
- We maintained gas safety compliance above 99% despite the challenges of access to some homes during lockdown and following the cyber-attack on Gasway's IT system in November 2020

The overall repairs and maintenance budget was £3,636,992, made up of:

- for component replacements (kitchens, bathrooms, boilers etc) £1,600,000
- for Cyclical Works (external and internal redecorations, gas servicing, electrical testing etc) £407,998
- for Responsive Repairs (including Void works) £1,628,994

Targets for 2021-22

- Get the gardening right and improve customer satisfaction. A new contract has been in place from 1st November 2021
- Complete initial work on investment required to achieve Net Zero Carbon and improve energy efficiency – this is under way
- Develop plan in response to new Building Safety Bill and proposed Social Housing White Paper particularly in relation to customer engagement

Community Investment

Achievements since the last Annual report

There was far more activity due to Covid-19

- **Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme**
 - CHS played a key role in alleviating hardship in Cambridgeshire.
 - More than doubled turnover in financial year (£298,691 to £607,663)
 - More than doubled the number of clients in the year (787 to 1940)
 - No disruption to the services despite lockdowns
- **Money Matters**
 - The number of new CHS weekly referrals during the Covid 19 crisis increased from an average of 2 per week pre Covid to 8 per week during the year.
 - Our contact with new CHS tenants about financial support increased from 50% to 80%.
- **Digital Inclusion Partnership**
 - Partnership to enable ICT kit to be quickly distributed to school children. It is likely to result in an independent organisation being set up to facilitate partnership working in Cambridgeshire and a Digital Inclusion Conference (online) which had 270 delegates.

Customer satisfaction with Money Matters Service remains high: **98%**

Customer satisfaction with CLAS remains high: **99%**

Lessons Learnt

- We published our latest evaluation report from the University of Cambridge, available here [New Horizons: Long term impact of coaching and the wider context of structural poverty](#). A strong message was that participants had built helpful relationships with their coaches. It also found that the impact of people's mental and physical ill health continued to act as a barrier to both work and financial stability.

Community Support Services

Achievements since the last Annual report

Maintained delivery of services

Both nurseries continued to deliver service to key workers and vulnerable children during the lockdowns. This enabled key workers to carry on delivering essential services.

We continued to deliver housing related support to young people, young parents, people with learning disabilities and women with mental health problems. There was one outbreak of COVID at a service.

During the year we closed our Looked After Childrens Service in Cambridge (120) as a result of declining occupancy rates. We retained the lease on the building to enable us to have greater flexibility in offering support services to young people in the 2021 retendering – and, in the meantime, have expanded our offer to people with learning disabilities in Cambridge by providing additional housing (7 units) and support from the site, (now called Alison House), at no extra cost.

We restructured teams in several projects to deliver savings.

Both nurseries are now using an app called Famly to manage operational, booking and financial elements of the service. This has helped to remove pressure on frontline staff and also enable us to plan ahead with more confidence.

All housing related support services are using the same management information system, Charitylog. This provides us with a platform for greater consistency, and the capacity to deliver management reports.

Lessons Learnt

We worked collaboratively with a variety of local community and faith-based organisations.

We made corporate funding applications on behalf of individual projects – previously these would have been made by individual projects.

Young people's projects

We have four young people's projects in Cambridgeshire where we provide accommodation and support. There are two in Cambridge; Railway House and the Young Parent Project, one in Ely; Wheatsheaf Close, and another one in Wisbech called the Fenland Young People's Service. We have been offered the contracts to continue to provide the support to those young people. We bid by ourselves in Ely/East Cambridgeshire and in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire we bid in a consortium with other organisations like the YMCA, Riverside, and Orwell Housing. In Fenland we teamed up with Longhurst Group.

Older Peoples Services

The pandemic has been a major challenge for the teams in our two care homes and three extra care schemes. At the start of the pandemic 11 residents died at one care home within a short period. A huge effort was required to maintain infection control, maximise testing and maximise vaccinations as these became available. Despite all the challenges there was no loss of service and both homes have been covid free for several months.

A County Council review of older peoples accommodation strategy looks likely to reinforce the place of Extra Care as a key part of local provision and CHS are seen as exemplars in terms of the service we offer.

Achievements since the last Annual report

Registered Care

- The sale of our care home in Ely as a going concern was completed at the beginning of December 2020 and the new owner made sure everything ran smoothly
- Covid response, CQC positive assessment, new meeting pod donated to Langdon House
- A procurement exercise was undertaken which has resulted in a significant saving of £20,000 pa on housekeeping costs.
- A 10 year agreement has been signed with the County Council coming into effect from February 2021. Two beds in each home are now block booked by the County meaning that CHS are paid for these beds even if they are empty.
- A comprehensive fire safety inspection for the two care homes was carried out and all of the recommended improvements, including a mister system, are being implemented.

Extra Care

The Extra Care teams have also worked very hard to maintain service levels during the pandemic. This has been a success and there were no covid cases in Extra Care after 5 very early cases were dealt with.

- Financial performance: The strong performance of the extra care service has contributed over £140k pa extra to the target and has provided an overall gross surplus of £1m during 2020/21.

Sheltered Housing

- All three homes successfully transferred to the housing management team and the first phase of savings identified as part of the process.

Where performance did not meet targets:

Care homes did not achieve their targets but still made operational surpluses. Given the impact of covid during the year this is still a good performance. The specialist independent review planned for this year will aim to identify how to maximise the surplus generated by the homes. Care homes now have legal arrangements in place to charge interest on late/deferred care home fees.

Targets for 2021-22

Registered Care

- Review of food provision to ensure best value for money
- Work with Property Services on gardening procurement
- Complete staff and management changes started last year as part of commercialisation project
- Expand use of Nourish to include electronic medical management

Extra Care

- Implement improved process to relet flats
- Introduce Nourish to improve care plan management and efficiency
- Set up improved accounting system
- Work with County Council as they develop their accommodation strategy for older people

What is 'Net Zero' carbon and what does it mean for our housing?



What is 'Net Zero'?

World leaders met at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow to try to come up with a plan to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees to avoid catastrophic climate change. In fact the outcome from the COP26 promises is forecast to be a 2.4 degree rise and that is only if promises are delivered. Countries will have to drastically cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases like methane. 'Net zero' refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas you put into the air and the amount you take out. The UK government has set a target to become 'net zero' by 2050.

How does housing come into this?

Energy used to heat homes accounts for 14% of the UK's total carbon dioxide emissions. The UK will not meet its 2050 net zero target without "the near-complete elimination of greenhouse gas emissions from UK buildings" – Climate Change Committee. There are currently 29 million homes in the UK, and almost all will need retrofitting by

adding insulation. New heating sources will also be needed as 85% of homes currently use gas boilers. One of the technologies set to replace gas boilers are heat pumps. They are powered by electricity and use pumps to extract heat from one place and move it to another. The government has a target to install 600,000 heat pumps per year by 2028. However the cost of electricity to run heat pumps is much greater than the cost of gas. So homes will need to be much better insulated if heat pumps are to be affordable for people on lower incomes. Electricity use in homes accounts for 4% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions and considerably more electricity from renewables will be needed as people switch to electric cars and electric heating.

What is CHS doing about this?

CHS will have to assess what work needs to be done, what the most effective work is and how much it will cost across all of our housing stock

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Railway House residents learn new cooking skills

Railway House provides accommodation and support for young people aged 16-25 who would otherwise be homeless. We were very fortunate to have been awarded a grant from Mills and Reeve (via the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation) to deliver a cooking course to our residents. Each resident was provided with a complete set of equipment needed for cooking, the opportunity to complete a basic food hygiene certificate, and 6 cooking sessions. They made a range of cheap, nutritious and filling meals that could be batch-cooked and frozen, such as spaghetti Bolognese, curry, and cottage pie. Residents have reported feeling more confident in the kitchen and we have certainly noticed fewer take-aways being delivered!



Car chargers at new CHS homes in Haverhill

CHS has built our first site in Haverhill, Suffolk and it is also the first development to have electrical car chargers – you can see them at the front of the building in the picture. The block of flats houses nine flats to rent, which are a mixture of one and two bedrooms. Each flat comes with either a Juliet balcony or larger balcony. There are no private gardens but there is a communal garden, which will be used as a drying area for clothes.

What is 'Net Zero' carbon and what does it mean for our housing?

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to try and achieve a net zero carbon target. At present we are working out what it is going to cost us over the next thirty years so we will have a more accurate long term financial business plan. Based on figures from other housing associations we think it will cost CHS an additional £60m over 30 years. We are not planning to commence the work in the near future as a great deal of planning and preparation needs to be done first to get it right. We need to find the most cost effective way

of achieving the greatest improvements. The government hasn't yet set out a strategy to fund this work so we are waiting for further guidance and announcements on this. An interim target is that rented homes need to achieve energy rating of C by 2030. Most of our properties are C or better but some of them aren't and we will need to do some work over the next ten years to improve those.

Contacting CHS / CHS Contact Details



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Please note that our head office in Histon is no longer open to visitors.

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Tel: 0300 111 3555
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Email: repairs@chsgroup.org.uk

E-newsletter

Many people now receive The Network as an e-newsletter by downloading it from the myCHS portal. Register online via our website chsgroup.org.uk You will need your tenancy number, a 6 digit number that can be found at the top of your rent statement.

Please contact us if you would like it in audio or large print formats.

Follow us on:



Please note that our head office in Histon remains closed to visitors and we expect this to last until at least April 2022.

We will continue to answer phone calls on **0300 1113555** however you may find things take a little longer – if possible please contact us on **Livechat** (accessed via www.chsgroup.org.uk) between **9.00am** and **5.00pm** on weekdays or email us at info@chsgroup.org.uk. We will reply to e-mails as quickly as possible. If you are a 'myCHS' portal subscriber you can contact us, for example to report a new repair.