

## CAMBRIDGESHIRE HANDYPERSON SERVICE

The Cambridgeshire Handyperson service provided by Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough came out top of our review of handyperson services available in the area. If you want to find out more have a look at their website:

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cambridgeshire-andpeterborough/our-services/cambridgeshire-handyperson-service/> or phone 01480 700 205.

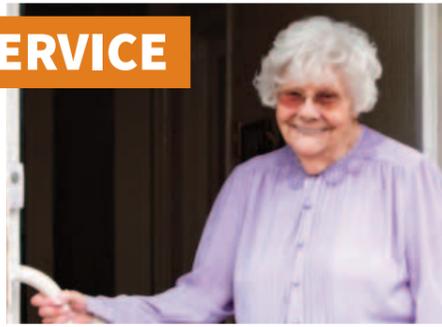
Last year some of you said CHS should provide an enhanced handyman service that tenants could pay for to do things in their house, such

as install handrails, curtain rails, fit toilet seats and do general repairs that are listed as the "tenant's responsibility".

The reasons why you thought we should provide this service included:

- It can be a lottery finding a good handyman
- There are an increasing number of minor repairs around the house that I used to be able to do but now struggle with

After comparing the cost of our contractors providing these services to a list of other leading suppliers, the Cambridgeshire Handyperson service provided by Age UK came



out favourably in terms of price and geographical area covered (covering all of Cambridgeshire only for people 65+ or with a disability). So as this seems to be the best option, we have decided not to provide our own service, but to let you know about this existing good service instead.



## Giving our customers more choice about how and when they receive their rent statement.

In August 2018 CHS Group agreed to stop sending paper rent statements and newsletters to all customers automatically. Instead as part of our digital initiative we agreed to encourage tenants to access the rent statement and newsletter via our customer portal MyCHS

As an organisation we have made a commitment to enhance the digital channels available to tenants so they can interact with us at a time which fits their lifestyle; whether that is to report a repair, to read our newsletter or be involved in the decision-making of the housing society.

This means you can now access rent statements and the newsletter 24 hours a day, 12 months of the year, and receive an up to date balance at a time that suits you. We also agreed to give people three reminders to "opt in" to continue to receive their rent statements and newsletter by post, and a small number of tenants have opted to do this.

As a result of this change only 290 customers still receive their newsletter and rent statement by post compared to 2,800 previously. The cost of sending the newsletter and rent statements by post has been reduced from £14,756 per year to £1,688.55 per year. This is a significant saving as well as delivering improved 24hrs /day rent information to tenants.

This year the Newsletter will be issued on Tuesday 14th May and Tuesday 12th November 2019.

## Alex Wood House

### 'Forget Me Not' Community Café

Supporting people and their carers in the local community to meet up in a relaxed atmosphere and have the opportunity to chat.

We are here to make a difference supporting people with Dementia to remain independent.

Open: 10:30am to 12pm on Thursday 30th May, Thursday 27th June & Wednesday 31st July

Alex Wood House, 3a Fortescue Road, Cambridge CB4 2JS

Tel: 01223 578602

No appointment necessary everybody is welcome. For more information please contact Julie on 01223 578602 or Email: [julie.fuller@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:julie.fuller@chsgroup.org.uk)



## CHS Contact Details

### Head Office

CHS Group  
Endurance House  
Chivers Way  
Histon  
Cambridge  
CB24 9ZR  
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

### General Enquiries

Tel: 0300 111 3555  
Minicom: 01223 713784  
Email: [help@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:help@chsgroup.org.uk)  
Web: [www.chsgroup.org.uk](http://www.chsgroup.org.uk)

### Repairs

Tel: 0300 111 3555  
(24 hours for emergency repairs)  
Email: [repairs@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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:



CHS GROUP  
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire

# THE Network

The CHS Group Newsletter

Spring Edition May 2019

## 'We've had a cracking time'

Sunflower Cambridge Nursery and Vera James House Care Home have been incubating and hatching chicks this Spring. It's been fascinating to watch and the residents, children and staff have enjoyed holding the fluffy chicks.

## CHS WELCOME NEW GARDENING CONTRACTORS!

CHS are delighted to welcome CGM Ltd as the new gardening contractors.

The contract commenced on 1st March 2019 and will run until October 2022. CGM is a family-run business that was established in 1985 and is located in Downham Market. That is where their main office is based. You told us that you would like to report issues with gardening directly to the contractor. If you have any gardening queries about delivery of the service please contact CGM directly on the following details:

[Operationswest@cgmltd.co.uk](mailto:Operationswest@cgmltd.co.uk) or telephone 01366 321351.

CGM will be logging all your queries and CHS will be discussing these with them on a monthly basis to see what the main issues are and what we can do to make improvements. This is a new way of reporting any gardening enquiries which will then be discussed at regular contract meetings. CHS also report to Estate Inspectors on a monthly basis via a monthly newsletter. During this year CHS will ask customers for their feedback from all sites that receive a gardening service. The schedule of proposed visits is available to view on the CHS website along with the gardening site plans.

Please visit: <https://www.chsgroup.org.uk/my-chs-home/rented-homes/gardeningschedule>



CHS deliver gardening to 121 sites yet we do not have an Inspector for all sites therefore if you are interested in becoming an Estate Inspector please contact CHS on 0300 111 3555 and we will send you an information pack. You can also earn Time Credits!



## 2019 GARDEN COMPETITION OPENS

First prize is £50 in gardening vouchers!

For more information about prizes, categories and entering your, or nominating a neighbour's garden, email: [lpap@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:lpap@chsgroup.org.uk)  
Don't forget to send us your pictures.

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## NEIGHBOURHOOD GRANTS POT FOR 2019 IS NOW OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

Do you have an idea for a community get together or something to improve your area? Get in touch on [lpap@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:lpap@chsgroup.org.uk) or 01223 713542 to see if CHS can provide some cash for your project. Children's gardening sets were purchased for the intergenerational scheme so that Cambridge Sunflower Nursery children can do gardening with the residents of Richard Newcombe Court.



Would you like to earn Time Credits which you can exchange for swimming and leisure activities, tickets at the Corn Exchange or the cinema and much more? Our [Sunflower@Cambridge](mailto:Sunflower@Cambridge) nursery is looking for volunteers to deliver leaflets to homes in the Cambridge area.

Please contact Gerry Cano on 01223 713549 or email her [gerry.cano@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:gerry.cano@chsgroup.org.uk) for more information.



## Montreal Square redevelopment

Earlier this year the CHS Board took the decision to go ahead with the redevelopment of Montreal Square in Cambridge. This followed a year of consultation with the residents. It was not an easy decision as more than half the residents remained opposed to the plans – you may have seen or heard publicity about it.

We are not comfortable upsetting some of our long-term residents in this way but the Board has to balance the interests of current residents against the wider social need for more affordable housing in Cambridge. You may know people who are desperate for a secure long term home in the city that they can afford.

Our plans would see the current 18 houses replaced by 36 new affordable rented homes and 6 for shared ownership. Our design retains

the same amount of open green space, in the same place. All the current residents will be able to return to new houses in Montreal Square, which will be larger, more modern and more energy efficient than their current ones, each with their own off-street parking, though they will have smaller gardens. They will pay a similar rent to what they pay now and will receive a Home Loss Payment of £6,300. CHS will support and pay for everyone to move out temporarily or permanently, as they wish. And CHS will also support the creation of a new community of current and future residents when the redevelopment is complete.

For further information on the plans for Montreal Square, please visit [www.chsgroup.co.uk/montreal-square](http://www.chsgroup.co.uk/montreal-square)

## NIGEL'S UPDATE ON THE CHS BUDGET

CHS's budget for the year from April 2019 is tighter than we would like it to be but there are no service cuts or reductions which would affect you. During the last financial year we have:

- Made efficiency improvements but not the cash savings we had expected from our Doing Things Better project. This project was set up to find savings to offset the impact of the 4 years of rent cuts, the last of which was in April this year
- Been affected by having fewer residents in our Care Homes and having to pay higher costs for agency staff where we cannot recruit enough permanent ones. Our experience matches the wider experience for social care providers in many parts of the country
- Made a lower surplus than expected on the sale of Shared Ownership homes. This is partly a timing issue which should not continue in the current year but is also

because we have had to keep these homes affordable by reducing the initial share that we sell.

Some of these factors will continue in the current financial year and we also, along with everyone else, face huge uncertainty about what will happen with Brexit and what impact that will have on things like building materials prices, staff recruitment and the housing market. We have done as much planning as we can to tackle these various Brexit risks but quite a lot of this is outside our control. We are therefore monitoring our actual income and spending even more carefully than usual and will take appropriate action if these get out of line.



**Nigel Howlett**  
Chief Executive of CHS



## Domestic Abuse – Do you feel safe in your home?

**Don't suffer in silence** – we're here to help you.

Domestic abuse can ruin lives. One in four women and one in six men will suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime. On average, two women a week are killed by a current or former male partner.

**What is Domestic Abuse?** Domestic abuse means any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

There are different types of domestic abuse, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse, and being cut off from your family and friends.

Domestic abuse is one person taking control of another and using power over them. Children are affected by domestic abuse in the home, either by seeing abuse or by being abused themselves (child abuse).

**What will we do to help you?** At CHS we believe that you should not live in fear of violence or abuse from a partner, former partner or any other member of your household. If we're worried you may be experiencing domestic abuse, we will approach you sensitively to ask how we can help. If you report domestic abuse to us, we will respond quickly and agree with you

how we can help, how to keep in contact with us safely, and what steps to take next. If you are a perpetrator of domestic abuse, we will take action against you.

We will support you if you are experiencing domestic abuse to help you rebuild your life, agreeing with you how you want us to support you and working in partnership with other agencies. We know every case is different so we will advise you of what options you have. We will be supportive and non-judgemental. Let us know if you would prefer to speak to someone of the same sex as you and we will arrange this for you.

**Checking the risk to your safety** – we carry out a risk assessment for all domestic abuse cases. We will go through your options with you, which may include simple steps such as changing the locks or adding more security. If you are at high risk in your home, we will discuss with you options such as finding alternative accommodation. In an emergency, you should call the police.

**More help and advice** – Contact us to talk over your options. You can also contact:

- A national helpline is available every day - 0808 2000 247
- Cambridge Womens Aid - 01223 460947

## YOU SAID

The Gasway engineer was late or the appointment was cancelled late in the day after you had waited in for the repair or service.

You received letters advising that we had been unable to carry out your annual heating service but you had rearranged your appointment or the appointment had been missed by our contractor.

## WE DID

Gasway will contact you before 3pm to advise if the engineer is running late or unable to attend and explain why. You will be given the choice to either rearrange the appointment for an alternative day or advised of a new estimated time of arrival if you prefer to wait for the engineer.

We have improved our process with Gasway to ensure that we are aware if the appointment was missed by the contractor and of new appointments scheduled. This should ensure that you do not receive unnecessary letters regarding the servicing.

## NEW SHARED OWNERSHIP HOMES

CHS are pleased to be providing a large number of Shared Ownership homes as well as our rented homes to Cambridgeshire this year having already sold properties in Ely, Littleport, Waterbeach, Whittlesford and Sawtry. There is plenty more to come with new homes under construction in Melbourn, Caldecote, Fenstanton, Sawston, Offord Cluny, Bourn, Witchford and Balsham all due to complete before the end of the year. Properties will range from 1 bedroom apartments to 3 bedroom semi-detached houses.

Shared Ownership is a great scheme for those looking to get on to the property ladder but finding it difficult to find a home on the open market within their budget. To learn more about the scheme, what it means to be 'eligible' and to find properties in your area, visit [www.helptobuyese.org.uk](http://www.helptobuyese.org.uk). Or if you would like to learn more about CHS new homes, feel free to email your criteria, contact details and any questions you may have to: [newhomes@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:newhomes@chsgroup.org.uk).



A CHS new homes development at Littleport.

## Gasway Text Messaging

Gasway started an additional text messaging service to our customers during April. The message says:

*"We haven't forgotten you, we are still due to arrive today but may run a little late due to emergency work volumes. Please call our office on 01603 404755 if you have any questions or wish to rebook"*.

The message will be sent during the morning and afternoon to relevant customers (i.e. those who have an appointment booked for that morning or afternoon, but have not yet been attended).

