



**Kick-start your health
and wellbeing with Enrich**

**Families move in to new
affordable homes**

**“You said, we did” customer
satisfaction survey outcomes**

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COVER PHOTO:

Residents take part in a nature walk during the first Enrich session.



It's great to see spring emerging in Cheltenham after a winter that has had its challenges. Some of the wettest months we've seen combined with food and energy prices that are still high and continue to make life very difficult for so many.

Worrying about money is a frequent cause of stress and anxiety and so as part of the service that Cheltenham Borough Council provides through CBH, we offer a money advice service to all tenants. This is a free service that can help with making sure that you are claiming the right benefits, assist with appeals to DWP or HM Revenue and Customs or budgeting and general benefits advice. In Cheltenham we know that many people aren't claiming what they are entitled to and even a small increase can make a difference so if you need help and advice, please contact bma@cbh.org or calling FREEPHONE: 0800 408 0000. More information is also available on page 7.

Finding ways to improve how we support our communities is one of the reasons why last October Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) made the decision to move Cheltenham Borough Homes back to being a full part of the council. Since October we have been working hard to plan for making a smooth transfer. We are aiming that CBH colleagues will transfer to the council on the 1 July this year. As a current CBH customer we hope that on the 1 July, you don't really notice much has changed and that all the services that you rely on will still be running as normal, serving all customers just as we always have. One of the changes that you may see in the coming months is how we try and work with and listen to tenants and leaseholders making sure that you have a real influence over the services we provide to you. As leader of the council making sure your voice is heard and responding to your needs is a key priority and we hope that what we put in place to get you involved will work well and help improve housing services going forward.

If you want to know more about the planned transfer from CBH to CBC then please contact: CustomerQuestions@cheltenham.gov.uk or phone 01242 262626.

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the council

HOUSING SURVEY

In October 2023, Cheltenham Borough Council's Cabinet made the decision to start the process of bringing the management of the arms-length company, Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) back under the direct management of the council. This is due to major changes in legislation that place new responsibilities on the council as your landlord.


The council needs to make housing services more efficient to ensure that future investment in your homes can be increased to improve the energy efficiency and ensure they are maintained in the best possible way.

At the start of the year, all tenants, leaseholders and shared owners had the opportunity to share their views via the council's independently run consultation survey. The consultation, managed by independent housing consultancy, Campbell Tickell, ran for 8 weeks and ended on 11 February.


A huge thank you to the hundreds of you that responded to the survey and attended the webinar or in-person sessions. Your views will help the council to form the next steps in improving housing services.

The council was able to identify your key priorities:

- ASB and neighbourhood safety
- Addressing complaints
- Improving engagement with leaseholders
- Straightforward access and response – one number and local face-to-face community hub access

 **67% of respondents understood the reason for returning the housing service to CBC.**

 **83% of tenants and 73% leaseholder are broadly supportive of the proposed change.**

 **57% of respondents prefer mixed methods of communication (i.e. digital and paper), 25% of residents prefer non-digital communication and 17% of residents prefer digital only communication.**

What are some of the next steps?

The survey consultation formed the first step in an ongoing approach towards a refreshed housing offer. Next steps will include:

- Work with tenant representatives through the TSIP and CBH board, to map out a new framework and agree the governance model
- Work with residents and partner organisations to address your concerns regarding ASB and crime

Thank you once again for your views, the council wants to be closer to you and hear your views directly so you can help influence the way the council shapes the future of housing services.

YOU SAID, WE DID

You said: "We would prefer to be made aware of any planned works with contractors to our neighbours' homes."

We did: We are working on plans to let you know of any upcoming works to your neighbours' properties and who to contact should you have concerns so we can look into that for you.

You said: "The communications from your contractors following mould inspection in my home could be improved."

We did: We have since introduced a dedicated damp and mould team to make sure that these issues are addressed in a timely manner.

Find out more about damp, mould and condensation and how to report issues in our feature on page 15

CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS

"The operative that came out to make some repairs was professional, polite and had a bit of banter. He did the job to a high standard I'm really impressed, so thank you".

"My compliments to all the customer service team for always being so helpful on the phone and via email. I've never had such a good experience with any other business, and nothing is ever too much. Thank you for always being so happy, polite, and helpful."

E-BIKE BATTERY FIRE SAFETY

Did you know that the batteries found in e-bikes, e-scooters and some mobility scooters can be a fire risk?

E-bikes are a great way to get around, but if the batteries become damaged or begin to fail, they can start fires. Lithium battery fires can quickly spread out of control, and lead to large fires within minutes.

Converting pedal bikes into e-bikes using DIY kits, often sold online, can be very dangerous. Converter kits which don't meet UK safety regulations are much more likely to cause a fire.

Find out more about what you can do to keep you, your family and neighbours safe at cbh.org/e-bike-battery-safety or to report any concerns call 0800 408 0000 or through cbh portal.



ELECTIONS

The next scheduled elections to take place in Cheltenham will be borough council elections which will be held on Thursday 2 May 2024, when all forty seats will be up for election due to ward boundary changes. Voters are encouraged to refer to their poll card letter to check if their polling station has changed.

The Police and Crime Commissioner election will also be held on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Voter ID

If you want to vote in person, including anyone acting as a proxy on your behalf, you'll need to bring an accepted form of photo identification (ID) to the polling station. Voters who do not produce valid photo ID or a Voter Authority Certificate, will not be allowed to vote on the day. The photo ID must be an original, it cannot be a photocopy or shown on a device. A free Voter Authority Certificate is available if you do not have photo ID.

You can apply online at www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate or in person at the Municipal Offices.

Anyone who has registered to vote can apply for a postal vote. You can have a postal vote for a maximum of three years as long as you are at the same address, but you must re-apply if you move or change your name. You do not require photo ID if you have a postal vote. You can apply for a postal vote until 5pm on Wednesday 17 April.

For more information about Voter ID scan this QR code.



ST PAUL'S 'LOVE YOUR STREET' COMMUNITY EVENT

We were delighted that the St. Paul's 'Love Your Street' community event was such a fantastic success, even the odd rain shower failed to dampen spirits!

It was great to see and work with our new partners, Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire, CBC Clean Green Team and Tidal Training, as well as continue our work with local PCSO's and Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service in supporting our local communities.



CHELTENHAM FESTIVALS PARTNERSHIP

'The Men's Group' were extremely fortunate to receive free tickets to Cheltenham's Music Festival and Literature Festival. Cheltenham Festivals are a prominent part of the cultural calendar of our town and have been running since the 1940s.

CHELTENHAM

Festivals

Cheltenham Festival's, which is charity run, is keen to broaden access to Cheltenham's local community so has been working in partnership with us and Cheltenham Communities Partnership to offer free tickets to festival events for groups within the community, who wouldn't usually have the chance to attend these types of events.

Not one of the eight attendees of the Men's group had ever been to the Music Festival or the Literature Festival previously, so it was a real treat for them to attend.

CBH COLLEAGUE RECOGNITION

We'd also like to give a shout out to Alexis Turner, who was nominated by a CBH customer to be Dunelm's shining star for December. Alexis attended the reopening of the Dunelm Cheltenham branch where she received a fabulous £50 voucher to spend in store.

Alexis said, "it was such a wonderful surprise to be nominated, I thoroughly enjoy my work supporting our customers. Being nominated and then winning was an unexpected pleasure, it is lovely to know my hard work and dedication is recognised within our community."



DROP IN TO SEE THE BMA TEAM

Come and join the Benefits and money advice team who are hosting free drop in sessions for CBH customers at the Ron Smith Pavilion, every Thursday between 9am-11am. These sessions provide customers with the opportunity to raise any money concerns they have with the team, whether that be seeking advice about cost of living, benefit check up or general budgeting tips.

You'll also find the team every Wednesday at Cheltenham Job Centre, between 10am-2pm.

Not able to make it to these? You can contact the team by phoning the customer helpline or by sending an email to bma@cbh.org



I couldn't thank the benefit and money advice team enough. I had tried to apply for PIP on my own but got turned down. With the team's help and support with finding the correct evidence, helping to investigate my conditions and how they affect me, I have now been awarded PIP. I am now financially able to pay for carers to support me with my day-to-day care.

Customer testimonial



DELIVERING JOY WITH DUNELM

Delivering Joy is a community event in partnership with Dunelm during the festive period, where allocated tags for several selected schools, care homes and charities within the area were placed on a Christmas tree. Due to the ongoing positive relationship, we have with the local Dunelm store, it was agreed for CBH to be included within the numbers for the 2023 campaign.

CBH colleagues nominated 65 customers who were struggling last year, to have a tag placed on the tree for a member of the community to buy a present, helping to ease financial pressures during the festive time of year. Those nominated were given their gifts by the nominating CBH colleague shortly before Christmas.



BMA team leader Lianne with Naomi (Community Lead) launching the CBH nominated tags

SUMMER SCHOOL UNIFORM CAMPAIGN

We are also working with Dunelm Cheltenham and local schools, collecting school uniform items to recycle back into the community to those who are facing financial hardship during the cost of living crisis. If you have any reusable school uniform, please think about donating to our main donation point – Dunelm Cheltenham. The benefit and money advice team will be bringing all these items together to hand out to those in need, ahead of the new school term in September.



We're collecting items which are in excellent/very good reusable condition:

- Polo tops and shirts
- School shoes and trainers
- Jumpers and cardigans
- Unbranded school PE kits
- Trousers, skirts and pinafores
- School bags and lunchboxes

If you find you are unable to afford uniform for your children, please contact the BMA team who will be able to provide you with advice.

WINTER WELFARE

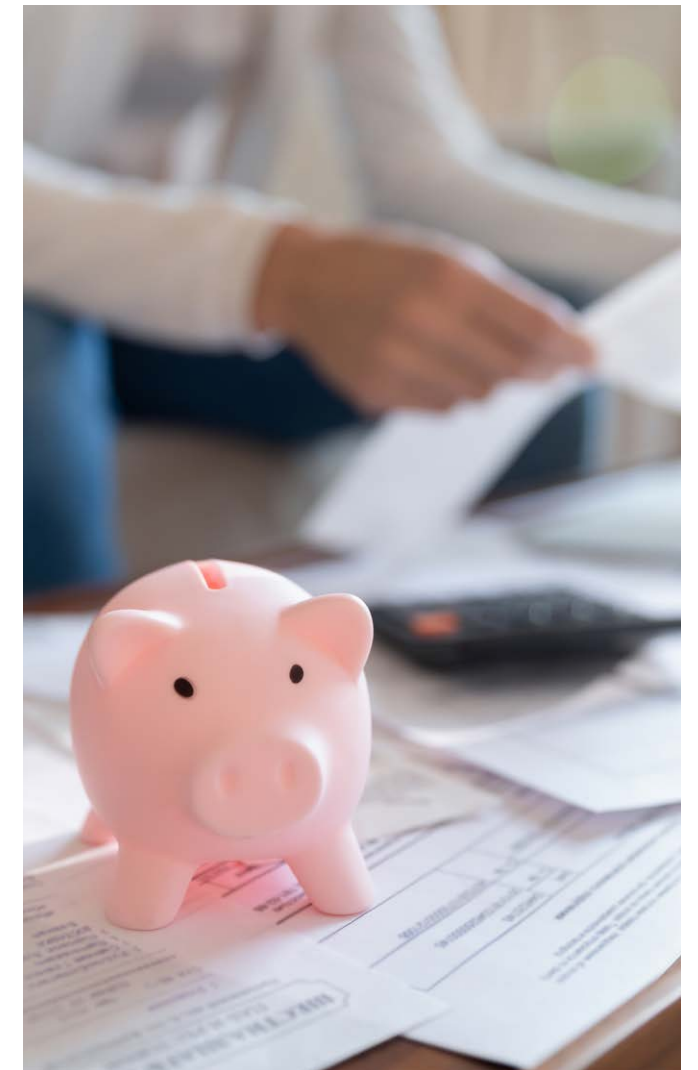
Delivering Joy was not the only way we partnered with Dunelm last winter. The Winter Welfare campaign saw donations from communities of duvets, bed sheets, pillows, pillow covers, throws and blankets which could be allocated to those in our communities who are vulnerable and in need during winter.



UNIVERSAL CREDIT

In the Autumn Statement 2023 it was agreed that Universal Credit would increase from April 2024 following inflation. This could mean that for those tenants who weren't eligible for Universal Credit in 2023, may be eligible after April 2024. If you are unsure if you are eligible, we advise you to contact the BMA team for a benefit check where they will ensure you are claiming what you are entitled to.

Universal Credit Migration is still taking place focusing on those on Tax Credits. This will eventually roll out to other legacy benefits. Once you get your migration notice letter, it will specify a date you will need to claim Universal Credit by. Once you receive your letter of Migration, please contact the BMA team as they can help you make the claim, talk you through how Universal Credit works, provide advice on what transitional protection you may be entitled to and answer any questions you may have.



FAMILIES MOVING INTO THEIR HOMES AT HILLFORT PLACE AND PEAR TREES

In partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council and local contractors we continue to bring more homes to Cheltenham. We have been working with communities across Cheltenham to regenerate neighbourhoods and build new homes to make the town an even better place to live for everyone.

We are absolutely delighted to confirm that families have begun settling into their newly built homes at developments at Hillfort Place and Pear Trees.

With five new properties, at Hillfort Place on Shurdington Road, developed in partnership with Kendrick Homes and completed in October 2023 and nine properties at Pear Trees, Leckhampton in partnership with Newland Homes, which completed at the start of 2024.

The Pear Trees development has the first net zero carbon homes powered by renewable technologies. This means that these properties have fantastic insulation, air source heat pump heating systems and solar PV panels. They are also ready to charge electric vehicles.

"This is a dream come true for all of us and we are eternally grateful for this opportunity."

Sarah - CBH customer on her new home - Hillfort Place



ELECTRICAL TESTING

Why it's important to keep your appointment

To make sure your home stays safe we carry out regular free electrical checks. Every five years, it is our responsibility to carry out an EICR (Electrical Inspection Condition Report) at your property.

It is important to carry out these checks to make sure that connections have not become loose over time, there is no excessive wear and tear and to ensure that wiring is in line with regulatory requirements. Faulty and old wiring is one of the main causes of electrical fires in the home and regular testing provides protection for you, your family and neighbouring properties.

This is why it is essential to keep your electrical check appointments and to allow our team of fully qualified electricians access to your home. There may be financial implications for you if we are unable to complete the test due to not being able to gain access to your property; if there are excessive belongings (hoarding) or if you have carried out works to your property without Part P paperwork or consent.

What happens during the inspection?

- We will need access to all rooms in your home
- The power will be off throughout the inspection
- Tests take up to 4 hours to complete depending on size of property
- We will check and remove sockets and switches and test your pendant lights and fuse board
- We will test smoke alarms at the same time

If, for whatever reason, your property does not pass its inspection, we may carry out minor repairs at the time. For any major



faults, depending on its nature, we will arrange for a CBH electrician to come back at a more convenient time, or if necessary, refer your property to an external contractor for repair.

You can find out more information about electrical testing by visiting our website www.cbh.org/electrical-testing/ or watch our video (QR code scan) to see how your inspection will be carried out.

For more information on electrical testing scan this QR code.



HANDLING COMPLAINTS AT CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES

Cheltenham Borough Homes take complaints seriously and ensure each complaint is dealt with in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code. We take valuable learning information from each complaint to ensure that CBH have acted and listened to you.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided to you by Cheltenham Borough Homes, there are a few ways for you to be able to voice your concerns.



Please contact CBH on:

Telephone: 0800 408 000

Email: cbhcustomerrelations@cbh.org

Write to us at:

**Cheltenham Borough Homes
Oakley Resource Centre
Clyde Crescent
Cheltenham
GL52 5QJ**

**Or register your complaint via
My CBH portal**

Please note you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point during the complaint process. It cannot investigate your complaint whilst your complaint is going through our internal complaints' procedure, however the Ombudsman may be able to help you and your landlord reach a resolution. The contact details are:

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

If you'd like to learn more about our complaints policy, please visit:
www.cbh.org/making-a-complaint/



FREE CLASSES TO KICK START YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING JOURNEY

Looking for new ways to boost your health and wellbeing this year?

If so, then why not give our free 'Enrich' sessions a go. We've teamed up with our friends at the Council, the NHS and local partners to help you with your health and wellbeing journey.

Clare, our community investment officer, shares some words below:

"We've got something for everyone. Whether you're looking for some new healthy recipe ideas, an opportunity to embrace Cheltenham's stunning collection of outdoor spaces or take part in some relaxing exercises, we've got everything you need to put your health first."

"It's a great opportunity to meet new people, have fun and have a chat over free refreshments. You can also look forward to the free Enrich rewards programme every time you attend a session. These reward points can be used on items to help with your health journey and include water bottles, cooking and exercise equipment."

Interested? We are running these sessions with support from local partners every Tuesday 11-1pm at St Marks Church Hall, Church Road, St Marks, GL51 7AL (venue is wheelchair accessible).

We'd love you to join us, to book your place please contact communityinvestment@cbh.org or call 0800 408 0000.

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND



Cheltenham Borough Homes is pleased to be partnering with Cheltenham Borough Council for a project which will help many people and their families who are fleeing war torn countries find new homes in our town. £2.36m of funding was allocated to the council by the government's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and helps to provide much needed housing for those who are fleeing conflict.

As a Town of Sanctuary, Cheltenham residents have generously provided refuge following the war in Ukraine, and at present there are 75 households hosting Ukrainian guests.

We look forward to welcoming our new customers into accommodation they can feel proud to call their home. For more information about the Local Housing Authority Fund visit www.cheltenham.gov.uk/lahf-funding



DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION OUR TOP TIPS

We take damp, mould and condensation (DMC) seriously. Even though we're approaching the warmer months where you might consider damp, mould or condensation to be less of an issue, we want to share our top tips helping to keep condensation and mould at bay in your home. However, don't suffer alone and get in touch if you find that these tips aren't helping.

Please contact the DMC team through your MyCBH account or call 0800 408 0000



Hang washing outside to dry. If you have to dry washing inside have a window open or extractor fan switched on.

Leave windows open for at least 30 minutes after to help the moisture disperse.

Open all windows for 20-30 minutes every morning to ventilate your home.



Don't leave kettles and pans boiling for longer than necessary and use extractor fans where possible.

Cover pans when you're cooking.

Keep the kitchen and bathroom doors closed to stop moisture moving around your home



Keep extractor fans on and clean any fan filters regularly (at least once a month).

Keep your furniture away from walls to allow the air to circulate.

Keep your heating on a low level throughout the day rather than blasting it for short periods.



WILD AND GREEN OUTDOOR LEARNING

We have partnered with Wild and Green to deliver a successful Forest School/ Outdoor Learning project for children within The Moors.

Through our successful funding application to the Build Back Better Fund, we started the project in September 2023 and ran it until November 2023. The children who attended these activities have learnt how to safely collect bugs and insects to observe, fire safety when using a fire pit and how to safely make a fire, cook on the fire, then put the fire out without causing injury or damage. They also learnt how to create items out of natural materials found in green spaces such as sticks, foliage, rocks and litter which led to a Christmas Wreath Making session where children and their families were able to work together to create their own natural wreaths for Christmas.

To enhance these sessions further, we partnered with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, The Big Local and Cheltenham Borough Council to plant 3000 daffodil, crocus and primrose bulbs on St. Peters Square. The children were taught the whole bulb planting process from preparing the ground, planting the bulbs, to replacing the turf to fill in the holes.

During the time the children and young people have worked with Wild and Green we can see that those taking part have increased their confidence levels, have made new friends from within their community and have learnt values such as kindness, politeness and working together, as well as building on skills that they may not have realised they have.



THE KIDS SAID:

"I like making things and toasting marshmallows on the fire"

"I'm not allowed out to play on my own, so it gives me a chance to meet new friends and work on my social skills."

"I love planting the bulbs and getting muddy!"

PARENTS ARE SAYING:

"The kids are always going on about the kids' club on St. Peters Square saying they love the actives they provided."

"It's really good, it gets my child out of the house and engaging with the other kids which she loves to be around. She's also doing some things she wouldn't normally do."

Amazing news!

The partnership project between CBH and Wild and Green was recognised for their work in the Moors at the 2023 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Awards in the category #GoingGreen – this category recognises the great work of organisations working to improve the environment by making eco-friendly and sustainable changes and encouraging others to do the same.

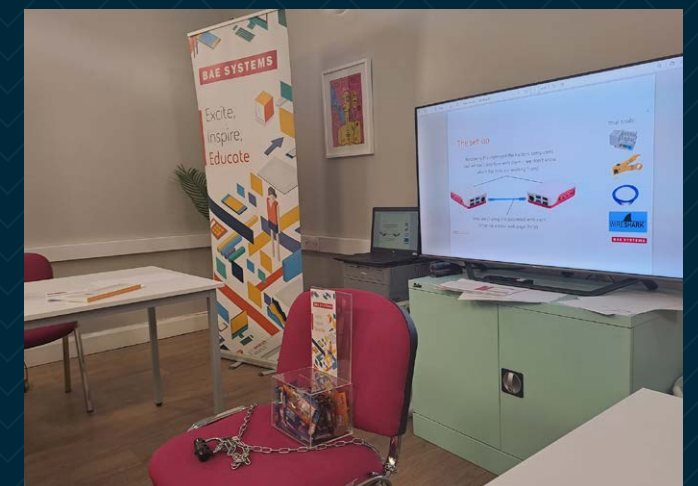


CYBER CLUB - 8 WEEK CODING CLUB

During the October half term two workshops were held at Hester's Way in the skills hub in partnership with BAE Systems, who we had met at the Science Festival. BAE Systems delivered a free cyber security activity to secondary school aged children in the hope to inspire them to have future careers in this industry, as well as teaching them new skills. The children raced in small teams to recover a password to be able to unlock a box of goodies whilst learning along the way about cyber security, encryption, and coding.

It was great fun and brilliant to see how involved children are getting in STEM activities. The sessions were so successful that we followed them with an 8 week coding club in January, funded by the build back better youth fund. This was run in partnership with the "Code Ninjas" who currently run their own club at Gloucestershire College. The club was free for children in the local communities to join.

The 8 week course with coding ninjas was such a success, we will be running it again. If you would like to find out more about these opportunities, please contact Rebekka Mann, community investment officer by email Rebekka.mann@cbh.org or by calling 0800 408 0000.



CHANGES TO OUR ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) TEAM

We've reviewed how our ASB team works in our communities and wanted to let you know who is covering your area. Cheltenham is split into three main areas, Cheltenham West, Cheltenham East and Cheltenham South.

Our systems detail which officer is responsible for each property, so please do not worry if you cannot remember who your allocated ASB officer is if you do need to contact us; our systems have been updated to reflect these changes.

The details of the south, east and west patches, and responsible ASB Officers, are:



Cheltenham West - ASB Officer: Sean Woods:

Hesters Way (western and southern parts), Arle Farm, Fiddler's Green and Springbank, Alstone, Rowanfield, The Moors, St Peter's and Swindon Village.



Cheltenham East - ASB Officer: Wendy Joseph:

Hesters Way (E), St Mark's, Town Centre, St Paul's and Whaddon.



Cheltenham South - ASB Officer: Christine Shilston (Thurs/Fri):

Cheltenham South - Hatherley, Charlton Kings, Leckhampton, Lynworth, Priors, Prestbury, The Reddings and Warden Hill.

If you have a current ASB matter open with us, and you will be contacted by the team as normal, within the case investigation process.

As a reminder, you can report ASB to us in a number of ways:

- Call our free phone number: **0800 408 0000**
- message us via the **customer portal**
- by email to **asbteam@cbh.org**



SKILLS HUB

Our skills hub offers a range of workshops to help develop your skills.

The sessions are free and easy to access and offer a variety of training and support including:

- job clubs
- maths
- IT skills
- budgeting and money management advice
- healthy living support

When: Every Wednesday and Thursday, 10am-12noon and 1pm-3pm

Where: First floor of the Hester's Way Community Resource Centre, Cassin Drive, Cheltenham, GL51 7SU



For details of what is being covered each week, check out the timetable on our website: www.cbh.org/skills-hub-timetable/

For more information on our **FREE** workshops - email tes@cbh.org or call/text Cathy on **07818 587058**

ENERGY EFFICIENCY WORKS



The Hester's Way neighbourhood has seen 34 properties benefit from a major retrofit programme. A further 25 council homes at Cumming Court in Prestbury have undergone retrofit works and additional improvements, which are on track to be completed by March 2024.

The properties have been future proofed as they are converted into warmer, more affordable and energy efficient homes. Customers will benefit from consuming less energy which will help lower heating and cooling costs, with improved environmental comforts supporting personal health and wellbeing.

The £1.4m scheme is being delivered by CBH with an £800k grant funding from the

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) wave 1 and £600k funding from Cheltenham Borough Council's housing revenue account.

This work, which supports the ambitions of Cheltenham Borough Council for Cheltenham to become net zero by 2030, is part of a programme of works to improve and decarbonise council owned homes for the benefit of our residents.

CAN YOU SPOT THE HAZARDS TO WIN?

Test your fire and safety knowledge by spotting the hazards in this image



The winner who correctly identifies all 9 hazards will win an amazing £30 Love2Shop voucher. It's not just fire safety you're on the lookout for, but other potential hazards too! Test your knowledge and enter today!

How do I enter?

Email your answers with the subject line "CBH competition" to: communications@cheltenham.gov.uk by 10am on Friday 31 May.

Our thanks go to SkillZONE for supplying the photo for this issue's competition. SkillZONE has 15 zones inside the life skills village allowing you to learn about making safer choices in different scenarios whether that is at home, while travelling or taking part in activities. Find out more skillzone.glosfire.gov.uk. Competition terms and conditions available at cbh.org.uk

GET YOUR SKATES ON COMPETITION WINNER

Lucky Lisa Sheppard was our CBHnews autumn competition winner! The prize was very generously donated by Visit Cheltenham.

Lisa won a family ticket to Cheltenham's Ice Rink and booked to go with her family on Christmas eve. The ice rink was part of a bumper programme of festive activities taking place around the town during the festive season. Lisa is pictured here with her daughter Lily.

