



CBHnews

SPRING 2021



Win £50 vouchers
A tree-planting success story
Work clubs go virtual

FREEPHONE 0800 408 0000
VISIT [cbh.org](https://www.cbh.org)



LET'S HAVE A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Join us
for a
trip down
memory
lane

Do you have memories or stories about the area you live in, or Cheltenham itself? Remember when you could buy anything in Woolies, or even the Rotunda school in Montpellier?

We want to pass on local history to other generations and people settling into our communities, so would love to share your wonderful memories, stories and folklore from growing up and living in Cheltenham.

This all forms part of the 'our town Cheltenham' project – for more information contact the community investment team free on **0800 408 0000** or communityinvestment@cbh.org



SEE YOUR BOARD IN ACTION:

Our Board and Committee meetings are open to the public, if you'd like to join us you can! Due to the pandemic, these are taking place 'online' using widely available software.



For a list of available meetings please visit:
cbh.org/about-us/who-we-are-what-we-do/cbh-board/

If you'd like to book your place, please contact rhian.watts@cbh.org at least 24hrs before the scheduled date and time of the meeting you wish to attend and we will send out relevant links and guidance.

COVER PHOTO: Our amazing work club attendee, Tim is looking very cool in his new job – see page 12



KEEP TALKING TO US!



If you receive a phone call from Acuity, asking if you'd be happy to answer some questions as part of our telephone survey, please say yes.

Your responses are helping us get a better understanding of how happy you are with our services and where we can improve. It's thanks to your feedback that our satisfaction levels remain high and we want to keep them that way.

In order to do this, we need you to keep talking to us and to let us know how you're feeling about CBH.

Some of the recent feedback that we're looking to make changes to include:

Repairs – during the pandemic, we've had to make changes to some of our services to keep you and our colleagues safe. To overcome the backlog of non-urgent repairs we introduced extra working hours, this included early evening working and Saturdays. Now we have caught up we have resumed normal service, but will be looking at options to expand our services and will keep you posted as we roll out new ways of working.

Making payments – our housing support officers are working closely with the revenues team to provide support to those who live in our sheltered schemes and need help paying their rent through a different method in light of the cash hall offices being closed. If anyone still requires further support please contact your housing support officer or revenues officer, alternatively please call 0800 408 0000

Call waiting times – we know that when calling our gas contractors you were experiencing long wait times. We've been working closely with PH Jones on a solution and are pleased to say they have put measures in place to make sure there are enough people to answer your calls and they've upgraded their phone software to reduce call wait times.

This is just a snapshot of how your views are helping to shape our services, watch this space as we'll be letting you know what you said and what happened next in future editions of CBHnews.

You don't have to wait for the call to share your compliments, comments or complaints – see page 15

A MESSAGE FROM STEVE OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE...

See Steve out and about on page six.

We've appointed Steve Slater as permanent CEO following a successful interim period, with the full support of our board and the council.

He took up the role as interim CEO in August 2020, following the departure of CEO Paul Stephenson, and previously held the position of executive director of finance and resources, since joining CBH in 2012.

During his time at the helm Steve has led the organisation through an unprecedented period during the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting colleagues to manage their work life balance while adapting services to be delivered remotely to stay connected with communities and individuals of all ages.

Over to Steve to give you his views:

"I am truly humbled and honoured to have been appointed permanent CEO. CBH is driven by people who have a real passion to make a positive difference to the lives of thousands of people living in Cheltenham. At its heart it has a tradition of putting people first, treating them well, and making a positive difference to their lives, by providing safe and secure homes, supporting strong and vibrant communities, and inspiring people to go beyond what is expected and deliver what can be imagined.

There are challenges ahead with the economic recovery post COVID-19 and meeting the challenges in the housing sector driven by the impact of Grenfell and the subsequent recommendations in the social housing white paper, but we have a solid foundation to support us through what will be a time of significant change.

Working in partnership with the council we have ambitious plans to create a town where everyone thrives. To make this a reality we will continually improve our customer service and ensure we listen to and act upon feedback, look at ways to make our homes more energy efficient to support the council's aim to be carbon neutral and ensure our new and existing homes are a place customers can call home."

MORE NEW HOMES FOR CHELTENHAM

In February, we were delighted to secure three more homes on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council as part of the new development at Cordwainers Road, Prestbury Road, Cheltenham. Keys were handed to the new tenants, ready for them to settle into their new homes.

There's nothing that makes us happier than to hear what the homes we provide mean to those who live in them. We've since received the following feedback:

Daunting as first house on my own but everything's lovely and the houses are great //

Overall really happy with how everything has gone and the house itself is lovely //

These properties follow the completion of eight new homes at Ingleborough Mews into which the new families moved just before Christmas.



NEW DEVELOPMENT IS A CODEBREAKER

We didn't have to look far to find a local connection that embraced the town's codebreaking heritage.

The 27 new one and two bedroom homes at the former Monkscroft Villas site will now be known as Radford Court after June Radford, a young codebreaker from Cheltenham.

June Sarita Radford (nee Lodge) joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) in 1943, at the age of 19. After basic training, she and a Cheltenham school friend, Bridget Anne Snowdon, volunteered for special duties working for Bletchley Park at its top-secret Eastcote Bombe Outstation. Here they worked on setting up Bombe machines to help find the daily Enigma settings, enabling the Bletchley Park Codebreakers to produce vital intelligence reports.

The two stayed together as a team on the Bombes until June went overseas in the summer of 1944, which took her to Bombay, Ceylon, Colombo before her return in October 1945. You can read the full story



of June Radford at: bletchleypark.org.uk/roll-of-honour/5596

At the time of going to print four of the five shared ownership properties are reserved and tenants have moved in to the fabulous homes.

Part of the £180m housing investment in Cheltenham's future made possible by Cheltenham Borough Council and delivered by Cheltenham Borough Homes to deliver a range of high-quality affordable homes across a variety of tenures throughout the town.

WE CAN'T 'BE-LEAF IT'

A tree
planting
success
story...

We've received 'tree-mendous' feedback from residents at Lynworth Court following the recent initiative to plant 38 trees at the site.

Teaming up with the Rotary Club (who secured their funding from Enovert Community Trust), Nature First and Cheltenham Borough Council, CBH sponsored the planting of Wild Cherry, Bird Cherry, Ornamental Pear and Whitebeam trees and thanks to the invaluable support received from residents we were able to turn the dream into a reality.

With Spring upon us, the trees will be changing in the coming weeks and will bring much needed ecological value to the area now and in the future. We were thrilled to hear from one of the residents who said:

"I have seen 10 chaffinches, for the first time, on the new tree outside our house - thank you"

This is fantastic news! That's not all as our CEO, Steve Slater also decided to take a gander around the area as part of a lunch time walk – we've got picture evidence below:

"Taken in Lynworth Court on a recent lunchtime walk. Great to see all the newly planted trees. Thanks again to all our partners and everyone who played their part in making this happen. Improving our communities whilst supporting the carbon neutral agenda. Superb work"

We've also planted six oak and four maple trees at Scott and Edward Wilson House. A big thank you to Nature first, who have helped us with the planting. Not only is this great for our tenants, it's also creating a fab habitat for the local bird life. This is the start of more things to come in the regeneration of wildlife within our blocks, which in turn can improve mental health too.



Bring back your zest for life

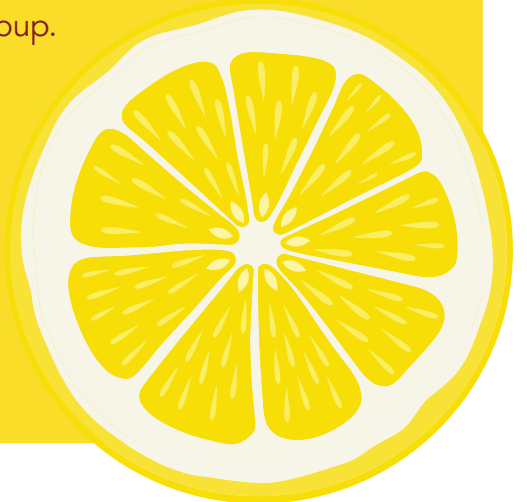
Looking after our wellbeing is so important, especially during these unusual times.

To help with this, we're delivering, alongside our partners, free online sessions on our What's on – Cheltenham West Facebook Group.

Known as Zesty Thursdays, each week at 1:30pm, you will find a range of topics to help you boost your health and wellbeing.

For more information contact our community investment team on **0800 408 0000** or email **communityinvestment@cbh.org**

Visit page 15 to find out more about our popular online 'What's-on' groups.



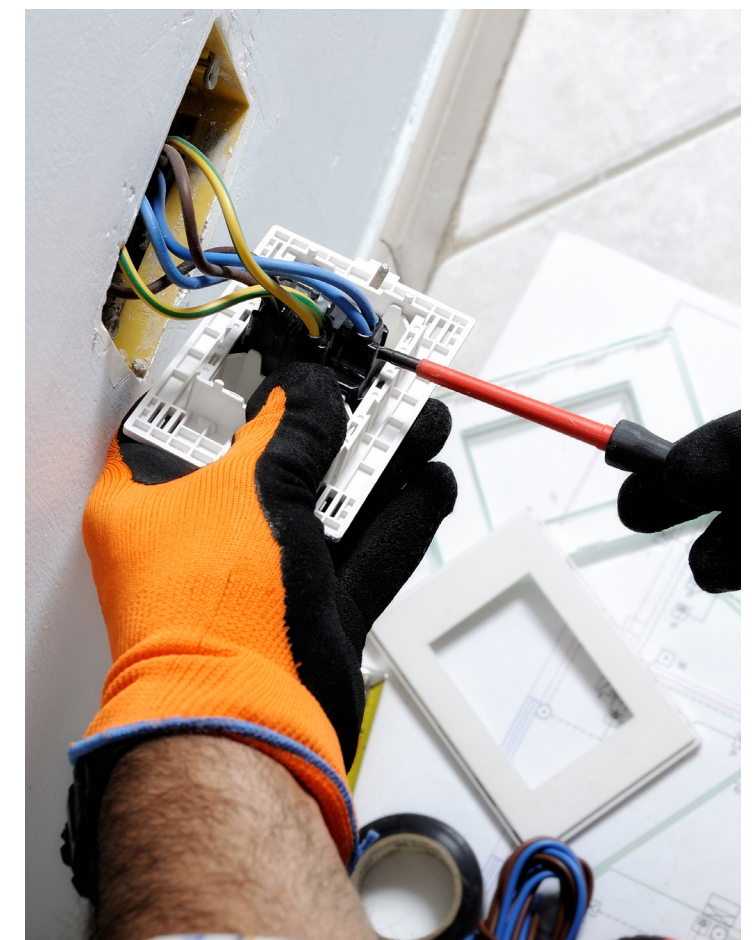
SAFETY ELECTRICAL CHECKS ON YOUR HOME

We're committed to keeping you safe, we do this by carrying out regular electrical maintenance checks in your home. This helps us to make sure the electrical installations are safe and we can spot any potential problems.

We will contact you to arrange an appointment. When we visit your home, it's really important that you give us access, as these checks are vital to keeping you, your family and neighbours safe. We will carry out these safety checks in a covid secure way. If you have any concerns about this just let us know on **0800 408 0000**

Please allow up to 4 hours for checks to be completed.

We've popped together some useful information to help keep you safe in your home, to check this out visit our website at: **cbh.org/services/your-home/home-safety/**



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

a benefit and money advice assistant

In January we were delighted to welcome a new member to our dedicated benefit and money advice team.

Suzanne shares her story below:

"The start of my career with CBH, probably stems from this question on the job advertisement.

Is this a challenging post? Yes, without question!

I thrive on challenges and to have the opportunity to make a difference to so many people's lives is something that genuinely interests me. I believe everyone should have the opportunity to have a home, make the most of their lives and enrich their sense of purpose in life.

We offer tenants free and confidential advice on all welfare benefits and day to day money management, including a free benefit and budget calculation. To know that I play a key role within the team in how people are living and when I can see what a difference a few changes can make to an individual or family is so rewarding.

My biggest priorities are to engage with our tenants on an influential level to ensure they can manage their money and benefits, to secure their rent and be able to live on the budget that they have each month. This involves listening to help with every conversation, putting the tenant first.

Sometimes it is simply providing them with positive feedback and other times its building a rapport so that they are comfortable to share personal information with us so we can support them.

CBH is an organisation that I am immensely proud to be a part of as we see the person not just the tenancy.

Every day is an opportunity for me to learn from my colleagues and our tenants, so I can consistently provide a first-class service, which is what everyone deserves.

What do I do when I'm not working for CBH?

As for my spare time, I spend it supporting my husband who runs his own business as well as parenting our two children. Any free time I have is spent in the great outdoors, walking, meeting friends and appreciating the wonderful countryside that we live in."



If you are struggling to afford your rent, having difficulties with benefits, trying to get to grips with Universal Credit or need help to manage your bills, let us know as soon as possible.

Our friendly benefit and money advice team can provide free, confidential advice on all welfare benefits and day to day money management – they're here to help you.

They can also suggest simple budgeting tips and can carry out a benefit check-up to maximise your household income – for more information give us a call on **0800 408 0000**, email: **bma@cbh.org** or visit **cbh.org/services/help-support/benefit-and-money-advice/**

Keeping your home safe

Each year we have a regular programme of works that are carried out to maintain your home.

This helps us make sure the parts of your home, such as kitchens, bathrooms, central heating systems, roof coverings and windows are replaced when they need to be.

We are currently working with our contractors at Joyner Group to carry out external works to some of the homes we manage, this includes repairing and renewing roof coverings, external walls, rainwater goods such as guttering and other associated works.

Despite the challenges faced by the pandemic, we're delighted to announce we've met our target of completing 23 blocks of flats and 31 homes during 2020/21.



This is all being carried out in a covid secure way, for more information on this contact our investment and technical team on **0800 408 0000**

Want to DIY?

Got a problem with your boiler, not quite sure how to bleed your radiators, or suddenly have no hot water?

Don't worry! Our contractors at PH Jones have got you covered, they've pulled together some quick how to videos to help you solve the issue yourself, why not check them out here:

PH Jones
phjones.co.uk/videos/

British Gas
britishgas.co.uk/help-and-support/troubleshooting-tips-and-guides

If you're still having problems, we're here to help, give us a call on our freephone **0800 408 0000**



SAY HELLO TO THE MAG TEAM!

Passionate about making a difference to their community, a group of residents in the Monkscroft area decided to team up to transform the green spaces around their neighbourhood.

Also known as the Monkscroft Action Group, their passion and drive to bring people together through gardening and events inspired them to look at new ways of funding their activities.

Since then they've been working closely with our community investment and tenancy management teams to create a vibrant and inclusive community.

The group members said:

Chris: 'By doing this we are all taking responsibility for the estate and making it nice and then it means that we feel proud of where we live. We are inclusive of everyone and want people to work as a team in their neighbourhood to make it a lovely place to live.'

Steve: 'In the past Monkscroft estate didn't have a good reputation but we have worked with CBH, Hester's Way Neighbourhood Project, Ubico, Adult Education in Gloucestershire and other organisations and have managed to improve where we live, we now have a gardening group and things are getting done and it's great'

Ian: 'The best thing about MAG is that it is composed of local residents doing voluntary work to benefit their own community. Everyone at CBH has been extremely supportive of our work.'



For more information on how you can make a difference to your area contact our community investment team on **0800 408 0000** or email communityinvestment@cbh.org

LOOKING FOR WORK? JOIN OUR ONLINE WORK CLUBS

Check out the inspirational stories of two of our work club attendees who have been making fantastic progress below:

TIM'S STORY

Tim had a long history of working and being self-sufficient, until recently, when he found himself in the unfamiliar situation of being unemployed. In need of some advice and guidance, he contacted us to support him through his next steps.

Our benefit and money advisors helped him to improve his financial situation, so that he could then focus on gaining employment. We have some words about Tim below:

"Tim is a pleasure to work with, he is motivated and open to trying new lines of work. We supported him in finding job vacancies, weekly employment support and keeping him motivated when things did not work out. Tim was offered two jobs this year, but these were delayed due to the latest lockdown with no start date agreed. Tim never gave up and his motivation to keep applying for jobs meant that he never lost focus in achieving his goal. His positive attitude finally paid off and we're delighted to find out that he has been offered a job and is looking forward to finding out his start date - he's a real inspiration to us all."



"The help and support I have got from Caroline and Gayna has been amazing, they have been very supportive, and the service I received has been fantastic, thank you both"

Tim

PINO'S STORY

Pino has an ambition to increase his employment prospects by gaining a CSCS construction card. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to deliver the type of training he needed which meant that we had to think outside the box through the delivery of online sessions.

The team worked closely with Pino to make sure that we were able to provide him with the right support so that he could thrive during the training. By downloading the necessary APP he was able to meet Lorna visually online, which meant that we could guide him through the training material.

This has given him the confidence to complete practice tests independently. Pino has also improved his understanding of the course material and what the Health, Safety and Environment test will look like prior to attending the test centre. Please see below some words about Pino:

"We are pleased to share that Pino continues to make fantastic progress and has secured his Construction Skills Certification Scheme CSCS card after passing his test - congratulations Pino."



"I was really nervous to start this at first, but I have gained so much confidence being able to practice the tests online with Lorna, visually seeing each question and answers helps me to remember them, especially the symbol questions, and knowing I am passing each time makes me feel ready to take the real test with confidence I can pass"

Pino

If you're worried about finding work and are having difficulties looking for a new job, our employment initiatives team can offer support to help you into work, education, training or volunteering.

For more information about this service give us call on our Freephone **0800 408 0000**

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR HOME SAFETY PAGE?



Just some of the areas that we cover include:

Fire safety:

When carrying out fire risk assessments on communal areas within the blocks we manage, we find lots of items that shouldn't be there.

We've found shoe racks, bikes, mattresses and ornamental displays left in corridors, lobbies and stairwells. These can easily become a tripping hazard in an emergency situation and could fuel a fire. Please make sure that you keep your items in your home or arrange for them to be disposed of legally to keep you and your neighbours safe.



Legionella:

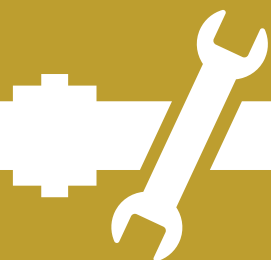
Don't forget to thoroughly clean taps and shower heads at least once every three months. It's also important to make sure there aren't any places where water can stay still and build up bacteria.

If you have any taps or showers you don't use regularly, run them for 5-10 mins at least once a month to clear pipes.



Gas:

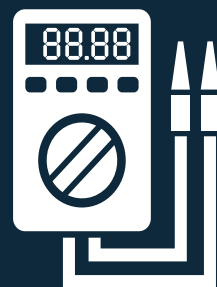
Thanks to everyone who has let our gas contractors PH Jones in their homes for their annual gas safety inspection. We are pleased to share that we've received positive feedback from you on PH Jones' performance – this is great news.



Electrical testing:

If your home is due for electrical safety testing, it's important that you let us into your home to keep you and your neighbours safe from the risk of electrocution and electrical fire – more information on this on page 7.

To find out more about the things you can do to keep your home safe, visit: [cbh.org/services/your-home/home-safety](https://www.cbh.org/services/your-home/home-safety)



INFO SPOT

What's on in your area?

Keep up to date on the latest activities and free virtual sessions in your community by following our Facebook Groups.

These are your one stop shop for keeping up to date with the latest goings on – to find them visit: our [@cheltborohomes](https://www.facebook.com/cheltborohomes) Facebook page and select the groups tab.

If you're currently following the What's on – Hester's Way West and the St Marks, Rowanfield & Monkscroft Groups, please be aware we will be shutting these down soon.

Don't worry as you can still keep up to date on the latest goings on. Why not check out and join our two new groups for Cheltenham West and the Moors.



EU resettlement reminder ★

Don't forget, if you and your family members are an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen you will need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to continue living in the UK before the deadline on 30 June 2021.

We understand this may be a stressful time and have popped together some information to help you with this here:

[cbh.org/2021/01/05/please-read-eu-settlement-scheme/](https://www.cbh.org/2021/01/05/please-read-eu-settlement-scheme/)

If you need any more support and guidance on what to do next, we're here to help, give us a call on **0800 408 0000** or email cbhcustomerrelations@cbh.org



Help us improve

Your feedback is important to us. Your views really do make a huge difference to the way our services are run. Although our satisfaction levels are high, we really need you to keep talking to us.

You can let us know how we're doing anytime at: [cbh.org/complaints-compliments-and-comments/](https://www.cbh.org/complaints-compliments-and-comments/)



Another chance to win a £50 voucher!



Many thanks to those who entered our last competition for a chance to win one of 3x £50 high street vouchers.

If you would like your chance to win a Love2Shop gift card all you need to do is send us:

Your answer to the following questions:

- 1. What page in this edition of CBHnews can you find the website address to our home safety section?**
- 2. A line on what you might like to spend your voucher on.**

Massive congratulations to our three winners, who will have received a £50 Love2Shop gift card in the post.

Of course, we couldn't resist asking them what they might like to spend their new voucher on – one of our winners told us:

"I will share with my family, the joy of family shopping and recreational fun spent with my loved ones"

Email your answers by the 18 June 2021 with your name, address, email and number to comms@cbh.org or send to Communications Team, Cheltenham Borough Homes, Oakley Community Resource Centre, 113a Clyde Crescent, Cheltenham, GL52 5QJ.

Terms and conditions available at cbh.org