



# CBHnews

**SPRING 2022**

**Great news – more new homes**

**Helping people thrive**

**Growing together – new gardening scheme**

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# HURRAY! PAINT BRUSHES AT THE READY



**We're loving this fab photo of (left to right) Debbie, our planned maintenance manager and Harry and Mark from Ian Williams.**

Celebrating a new 8 year painting contract with us, we're delighted to welcome back this fantastic duo who have been working with us for a number of years. Mark, supervisor for Ian Williams, has been with us since the last contract started a decade ago and Harry who joined 8 years ago as an apprentice will be returning alongside him as a foreperson. They will be out and about repainting the external and communal areas – so if you see them, why not say hi or give them a wave if you can.



**COVER PHOTO:** Becky brings the community garden to life at Cummings Court (see page 8)



# GREAT NEWS

In December, we brought seven fantastic new homes from local developer Cotswold Homes at Brockhampton Lane on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council.



We were delighted to welcome the families to their new homes before the festivities began and would like to wish them all the best as they settle in.

The three, two-bed four person houses, and two, three-bed houses for affordable rent; and two, two-bedroom homes are for shared ownership. Also known as 'part buy, part rent', these new homes are a direct outcome of our shared priority with Cheltenham Borough Council to increase the supply of housing and investing to build resilient communities.

Two great examples of the £180m housing investment in Cheltenham's future, made possible by Cheltenham Borough Council and delivered by Cheltenham Borough Homes

## WE GET THE GREEN LIGHT

We received the green light to provide 24 new affordable homes at 320 Swindon Road, which have been designed to support Cheltenham Borough Council's response to the climate emergency.

On the 18 November 21, CBC's planning committee unanimously approved the plans to revive the neighbourhood with high environmental performance new homes.

This is all part of our support towards the Council's commitment to be net zero carbon by 2030.

Why not see what you can do to help tackle climate change through *small steps to make big changes* on page 12.



# WELCOME ON BOARD

We are delighted to welcome Beverley and Christine, our newest independent board members – they share some words below:

“I am thrilled to have been appointed to the Board of CBH. I retired last year after almost 40 years working in Local Government and I had been seriously thinking about looking for a non-executive role for some time.



**Having spent a lot of my career as a Planning Officer and then in senior management, housing and especially social and affordable housing, was something that I understood a bit about but also something I felt passionately about in terms of the need not only to provide a roof over someone’s head, but also to help them to become part of a community with all of the added benefits that brings.** ”

It’s still early days but I’m really excited to be part of what is obviously a brilliant team and look forward to working with colleagues for the good of everyone involved in CBH, whether as colleagues or as customers.

In what’s left of my spare time (it’s true what they say – now I’m retired I don’t know how I ever found time to work!) I do a lot of walking



– last year I was entered into a challenge to walk the equivalent of John O’Groats to Lands End, which took me 5 and a half months to complete. I crochet, and am learning new crafts as well, and I do voluntary work with Cirencester Baptist Church where me and my husband are members.

Oh yes – and I get to spend more time with my husband, when he isn’t on the golf course and I’m not doing any of the things described above!”



Beverley

“

**I’m a firm believer that everyone deserves a home that is safe and secure regardless of where they are in life. A real people person, I’m passionate about empowering and inspiring them to have their say, as their voice is so powerful, it really can help make a difference to others.**”

I’m an advocate for equality and diversity and the need for it to be more than something we talk about but also something that we see in action.

So as you can imagine, I am delighted to be appointed to the CBH Board and am looking forward to working with the amazing people at CBH, whether that be colleagues, customers, partners or volunteers. Together we can provide great homes and stronger communities where everyone can thrive.

“Since moving to Cheltenham 20 years ago, the organisation I worked for were passionate about helping people recover from the effects of alcohol abuse, making sure they get the right support they need to get their life back on track. Over the years we worked in partnership with CBH, and together helped transform the lives of a range of people, each with a variety of issues.

With support from CBH we’ve been able to help them access the essentials they need to live, including groceries and help with finding a home and setting up their council tax.

When I’m not in work, I love going to the theatre and listening to all kinds of music too, my favourite is Opera. I also really enjoy watching television and you will often find me watching a good thriller. Reading, travelling, meeting people are a few of the other things I enjoy doing in my spare time, plus I’ve also booked tickets to see my Fair Lady this year and I can’t wait.”

# YOU'RE NOT ALONE, WE'RE HERE TO HELP



**Facing homelessness is difficult for anyone, especially when the cause is domestic abuse.**

Meet Kella our domestic abuse housing interventions officer who shares some words below:

"I'm passionate about helping people and making sure they feel safe in their homes. Looking at solutions, including providing support to help reduce the chances of anyone becoming homeless due to domestic abuse is a huge part of my role here at CBH.

No one should have to live in fear or suffer from abuse. It can be difficult to leave when you feel you have nowhere to go, so if you are in an abusive relationship or unsure of the signs and what the next steps are, I'm here to help you.

Together we can look at the options available including a place to stay and provide you with the support you need to keep you safe and give you a better quality of life."

You can find more information on this at [cbh.org/services/help-support/homelessness-advice/](https://cbh.org/services/help-support/homelessness-advice/)



## HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR BENEFITS OR PENSION RECENTLY?



**National charity Turn2us estimate over 63% of pensioners have never checked their entitlements.**

They estimate £1.8 billion of pension credits remain unclaimed by 1 million people.

**Don't miss out on your entitlements. Book your free confidential appointment with a CBH benefits and money advisor, call 0800 408 0000**

# PROVIDING GREAT HOMES



We're committed to providing great homes and carry out checks to make sure your home is in good condition before you move in.

## Things we will look for include making sure:



Standard pendant lights are fitted



The tiles are not painted. To replace your tiles and vinyl flooring you will need to get permission from your tenancy management officer first



Kitchen cabinets are free of paint



Standard doors (not glazed) are not damaged and hanging in each doorway



Light switches are white and not painted over



UPVC windows are clear of paint



Kitchen and bathrooms have standard non-slip vinyl flooring



Gardens are tidy and not overgrown

If you're due to move out of your CBH home it's worth checking that your original fixtures and fittings are all present and in good condition. Otherwise you may be recharged or even prevented from moving.

## I feel my home needs a new look – what can I change?

There are things you can do to spruce up your living areas, why not:



- Paint a wall or a room (paler colours bring more light into a room)



- Add floor, or table lamps to create ambient lighting



- Accessorise with curtains, rugs, cushions and throws – to add colour and texture



- Add houseplants to help purify the air

No need to fly tip - a good clear out can make a huge difference and the right storage can help make a space seem bigger.

If you're unsure about alterations you can make, let us know, we can talk you through it. Contact us at [housing@cbh.org](mailto:housing@cbh.org) or 0800 408 0000



# A SPACE TO GROW TOGETHER

Say hello to Clare, our community investment officer. She enjoys helping the people who live in our communities turn their dreams into a reality.



Clare talks about her passion for gardening and the amazing individuals who have brought their community garden to life:

“It all began with the people who live at Cummings Court who were keen to set up a community garden. I jumped at the opportunity to help them set the wheels in motion. Becky, our keen gardener couldn’t wait to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers as it can improve both physical and mental wellbeing and is a wonderful opportunity to help neighbours get to know each better.”



Becky, our keen gardener



John (left) and Jess (right) from Cheltenham is Growing





A big thank you goes to John and his team of volunteers. Bringing together helpers from Cheltenham is Growing, who pack a big punch in helping people grow their own produce and Men in Sheds C&G, a community organisation who build things including raised beds, compost bins, and other items to improve people's wellbeing. Down to their dedication we've been able to make our residents' dreams come true.

On a cold November morning everyone came together to create a garden that brings with it plenty of mental and physical health benefits. A project like this is only possible by building strong relationships and working in partnership with local organisations.

Becky was so excited when the raised beds were built, she said: ***"It was a dream come true, I can't wait to start growing some plants. My grandson who is two is obsessed with gardening and I look forward to spending some quality time with him teaching him these skills."***

Thank you so much to everyone involved in making this happen."

**For more information on our gardening/allotment schemes please contact [communityinvestment@cbh.org](mailto:communityinvestment@cbh.org) or call 0800 408 0000**



The wonderful volunteers from Men in Sheds



From the left, John and Jess from Cheltenham is Growing alongside our very own Karl (left) and Mark (right)



# HELPING YOU THRIVE



**Our brilliant trio Gayna, Caroline and Lorna provide an exciting update about training and employment.**

“Just before Christmas we joined forces with Gloucestershire College’s Construction lecturers to provide a work experience placement for one of their students. Since then, our partnership has gone from strength to strength, and we’ve been able to offer a further three students an opportunity to support them in achieving their course qualification. Later this year, we will be offering employment support on completion of their studies – watch this space, we’ll keep you posted on how they get on.

We also caught up with one of our 2019 Thrive graduates, Ethan, and we’re delighted to share he is doing incredibly well and is on track to complete the first year of his apprenticeship. During the past 12 months his confidence to succeed has grown, he now believes he can achieve anything he sets his mind to. He has also started taking driving lessons and even purchased his own car.

We’re so proud of the progress he continues to make and it’s a pleasure to remain a part of his career planning and see him mature into a productive and confident young man.

Congratulations Ethan and well done on all your success! If you need help with training and/or employment let us know at [tes@cbh.org](mailto:tes@cbh.org)”

Some words from our Thrive graduate Ethan:



**I’ve got so much confidence in myself now. I really enjoy learning and earning my own money. It’s what I always wanted. You have always shown me respect and helped me believe I can do anything I set my mind to. Thank you.** ”



# THANK YOU...

You're helping us be the best we can be.

Your views continue to influence the services you receive. We couldn't improve and support the people who need it the most without your input, which is why we continue to listen and act on your feedback. One of the many ways your voice can play a crucial role in telling us how we're doing is through our telephone surveys carried out by Acuity.

Since April last year, we've had a fantastic 1,000 responses. We have looked across the feedback you have provided as part of these responses, and it suggested that you wanted more opportunities to book your own repairs at a time that worked best for you. Whether it be in the comfort of your own home or while you're out and about running errands, we all lead busy lives, which is why we want to make it easy for you to book an appointment.

***We've listened to your feedback about availability of appointments and worked with the team to make changes. By working smarter we have increased the amount of appointments bookable each day.***

Among other changes, we've also updated the tech the team has, allowing them to complete jobs faster and more accurately on the system – giving them more time to be on the tools.

If you need help, you can get in touch with us at [housing@cbh.org](mailto:housing@cbh.org) or by calling 0800 408 0000

Along with telling us about how we can improve, we also get lots of very positive comments too, which really do brighten our day! – why not check them out below:

"I just think they are very good with their repairs and they are good with their timings, all the staff are very nice over the phone."

"My house is warm, repairs are carried out very quickly, contact with them is easy and their response is quick. Great landlords"

It doesn't end there, keep talking to us so we can continue to make changes and provide you with the excellent services you deserve. If you don't want to wait until you receive a call from us, no problem, you can let us know how you're feeling at [cbh.org](http://cbh.org)



# SMALL STEPS TO MAKE BIG CHANGES

We're delighted to announce we will receive grant funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 programme.


The £800,000 grant will help us to improve the energy efficiency of 59 homes across a variety of tenures, including leasehold. We will be installing fabric measures that improve the energy efficiency of these homes as well as, in some cases, fitting new, low carbon, heating systems.

This is part of our commitment to support Cheltenham Borough Council's ambition to be net carbon zero by 2030.


Did you know there are small steps you can take to make big changes and help reduce your carbon footprint?

With energy costs currently rising rapidly, cutting down on energy use not only reduces your carbon footprint but can also help you with your energy bills. Of course we all need to be warm and comfortable in our home too. The following tips will help you use energy economically:

**Turn it down** - save £80 a year by turning down your central heating by one degree - if you're elderly, unwell or have small children do not turn your heating lower than 18°C



When cooking make sure your oven door is kept close as much as you can, every time you open it a quarter of the heat is lost



**Take care in the kitchen -**

Keep the lids on saucepans and make sure you're using the appropriate size of ring on your hob for the saucepan being used. You can save money by turning down the gas or electricity.



We all love a cuppa but try not to fill your kettle right up - only boil as much as you need, you could save up to £20 a year



**Cooking a meal**

- why not make a big batch and freeze it for another day?



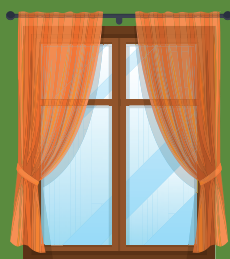
**Switch to LED bulbs**

- they last longer and are more efficient than regular energy saving bulbs. Each LED fitting can make you a lifetime saving of £180



**Close your curtains**

- at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and check for draughts around windows and doors



**Freezers** - keep it as full as you can and defrost it regularly as this could cost you £150 less a year to run



For more advice on this visit: [cse.org.uk/downloads/advice-leaflets/energy-advice/advice-leaflet-money-saving-tips.pdf](https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/advice-leaflets/energy-advice/advice-leaflet-money-saving-tips.pdf)

Cheltenham Borough Council have also put together the following useful toolkit to help here: [cheltenham.gov.uk/info/61/climate\\_and\\_sustainability/1638/householder\\_climate\\_toolkit](https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/61/climate_and_sustainability/1638/householder_climate_toolkit)



# WANT A CHANCE TO WIN A £25 VOUCHER?

For a chance to be our next winner, all you need to do is register to use our online portal at [portal.cbh.org](http://portal.cbh.org) by 1 July

It's really easy to sign up and it won't take up too much of your time either. You will need your:

- **Tenancy number** (this can be found on your rent statement)
- **Address**
- **Email**
- **Date of birth**



The fun doesn't end there, whether you've just signed up or have been using the portal for a while if you use it anytime up to the end of June you could win an additional £25 voucher.

## Wondering when your rent free weeks are?

We've got you covered as you can find all the information you need by visiting [cbh.org](http://cbh.org)

As a reminder, if you're behind on your payments, we will expect you to pay these on rent free weeks to reduce them. We want to help you so if you're struggling financially, please let us know as soon as possible through your portal, [housing@cbh.org](mailto:housing@cbh.org) or 0800 408 0000



# Crunching the numbers!

## Find how we're doing

We want to provide you with a great home and for you to feel you're listened to and understood – but don't just take our word for it. Each quarter we will provide you with the latest figures, so you can see how we're doing.

Since the beginning of April 2021 to the end of February 2022 we've:



Carried out **11,725** repairs and completed **99.6%** of emergency, urgent and routine repairs within target times



**100%** of stage 1 complaints are closed within agreed timescales



Answered **40,766** calls with **92.3%** of calls answered within **60 secs**



On average it takes around **21 days** to re-let a property over the year - this places us in the top **25%** of all housing providers

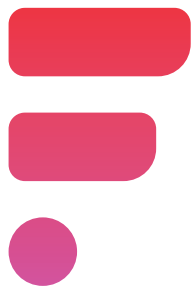
### Some wonderful comments we've received include:

*"Thank you for your help with my repairs today, you were really helpful, jolly and happy and I hope to speak to you again when I ring"*

*"Thank you for doing a brilliant job, took your time and were really thorough. Very happy with the cleaning that has been done today"*

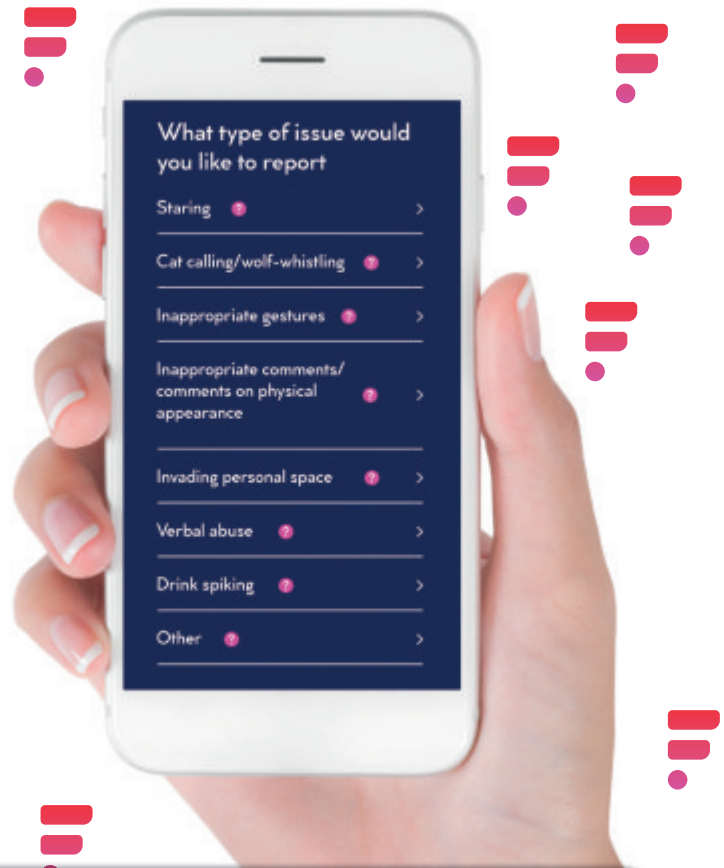
*Thanks for all your efforts over the past year. We think the results have been spectacular in terms of the reduction in ASB and related crime... is almost non existent these days*

Your views help us provide you with the services you need, let us know how we're doing at [www.cbh.org/complaints-compliments-and-comments/](http://www.cbh.org/complaints-compliments-and-comments/)



# flare

## An experience sharing app



- Flare is a safe space to share the everyday experiences of women and girls
- The app helps local agencies understand how and where you feel unsafe and take action
- It's anonymous, quick, free to use and can connect you to support and advice in Gloucestershire

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Download today  
by scanning the  
QR code or visiting  
[flarereport.co.uk](https://flarereport.co.uk)



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### Experiences may include:

Drink spiking, verbal abuse, feeling unsafe in public spaces, being sent inappropriate images, sexual comments in public, inappropriate touching without consent, indecent exposure, stalking, harassment, staring, upskirting...