

# Open Door, Spring 2023



## For the tenants and leaseholders of Cambridge City Council

### Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| .....  | 1 |
| For the tenants and leaseholders of Cambridge City Council ..... | 1 |
| Editorial.....   | 6 |
| From David Greening, Head of Housing Services .....              | 6 |
| Receive Open Door electronically.....                            | 8 |
| At the Council save time, do it online .....                     | 9 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Using your online Housing Account? .....                     | 9  |
| Get online for free or at little cost.....                   | 10 |
| Benefits and 'Social Tariffs' .....                          | 11 |
| Tablet Loan Scheme.....                                      | 11 |
| Free data for those on benefits .....                        | 12 |
| Did you know that to vote... ..                              | 13 |
| Your Satisfaction Survey results .....                       | 13 |
| Happy with landlord's service overall.....                   | 13 |
| The Council is easy to deal with .....                       | 14 |
| Happy with repairs in past 12 months.....                    | 14 |
| The Council provides a home that is safe .....               | 14 |
| Communal areas are kept clean and well maintained .....      | 14 |
| Tenants are treated fairly & with respect .....              | 15 |
| The Council keeps residents informed.....                    | 15 |
| Happy with approach to handling complaints .....             | 15 |
| The Council contributes positively to the neighbourhood..... | 15 |
| Using residents' feedback to improve services .....          | 16 |
| Do you know the Council's Housing For Older People?.....     | 17 |
| Moving to an Independent Living flat .....                   | 17 |
| Typical social activities .....                              | 18 |
| Ditchburn Place, for extra care .....                        | 19 |
| Increasing care as your needs increase: an example.....      | 20 |
| Life at sheltered schemes.....                               | 20 |
| Support from staff.....                                      | 20 |
| Events and activities .....                                  | 21 |
| Tenants' experiences.....                                    | 22 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Help for energy bills and the cost of living ..... | 23 |
| Help for families .....                            | 23 |
| Free school meals .....                            | 23 |
| Free childcare and meals in school holidays.....   | 24 |
| Free childcare .....                               | 24 |
| Free school uniforms.....                          | 24 |
| Household Support Fund - £100 .....                | 25 |
| Free food when needed.....                         | 25 |
| Free food and meals .....                          | 25 |
| Claim all the help you are due .....               | 26 |
| Help for paying rent.....                          | 26 |
| Reduced Council Tax.....                           | 27 |
| Claim all benefits due to you .....                | 27 |
| Benefits loans.....                                | 27 |
| Are your wages correct? .....                      | 27 |
| Travel costs.....                                  | 27 |
| Get one to one help at your Housing Service.....   | 28 |
| Help for prioritising your bills .....             | 28 |
| Get help to sort out debts .....                   | 28 |
| Debt and money advice .....                        | 28 |
| Avoid loan sharks.....                             | 29 |
| Use Credit Unions .....                            | 29 |
| Mental health and debts .....                      | 29 |
| Get fit and active for free this Spring .....      | 30 |
| Free & low-cost physical activities .....          | 30 |
| Get Families Moving .....                          | 31 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Healthy You .....                             | 31 |
| Exercise Referral.....                        | 31 |
| Invigorate .....                              | 31 |
| Free online & home-based activities.....      | 32 |
| Eat well on a tight budget .....              | 32 |
| 'Bacon & Egg' Mediterranean-style.....        | 33 |
| Healthy Home Cooking videos .....             | 33 |
| Free guided walks.....                        | 34 |
| Free Wellbeing Walks .....                    | 34 |
| Wellbeing Walks run by GP surgeries.....      | 34 |
| Mental Health Mates Walks .....               | 35 |
| Swimming and outdoor fun .....                | 35 |
| Your Housing Service.....                     | 36 |
| Improving your estate .....                   | 36 |
| Neighbourhood Clean-Up Days .....             | 38 |
| Tackling climate change.....                  | 40 |
| Plant a tree for Cambridge.....               | 40 |
| Trees for Babies scheme .....                 | 41 |
| Be counted in the Tree Challenge.....         | 41 |
| Join Cambridge Tree Challenge .....           | 41 |
| Eco-grants for community groups.....          | 42 |
| Apply for a Sustainable City Grant .....      | 43 |
| Resident Involvement.....                     | 44 |
| Residents' achievements in the past year..... | 44 |
| Your elected resident reps .....              | 46 |
| Enter Residents' Garden Competition .....     | 47 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Gardeners help nature by.....                                      | 48 |
| Leaseholders.....  | 49 |
| Beware domestic CCTV .....   | 49 |
| Home improvement grants .....                                      | 50 |
| Where to get financial help.....                                   | 52 |
| Struggling to afford food?.....                                    | 52 |
| Can't pay your rent?.....  | 53 |
| If you need to claim Universal Credit.....                         | 53 |
| If you can't pay your Council Tax.....                             | 53 |
| If struggling with mobile phone or internet bills.....             | 53 |
| Can't pay your water bills? .....                                  | 53 |
| Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme.....                        | 53 |
| If you don't have access to the internet.....                      | 54 |
| £1,500 for local groups .....                                      | 54 |
| Who to contact for services .....                                  | 55 |
| Cambridge Virtual Community .....                                  | 55 |
| Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline.....                               | 55 |
| Make council payments by phone .....                               | 55 |
| Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage.....          | 55 |
| Repairs.....   | 56 |
| Contact Council in Sign Language .....                             | 56 |
| Council Tax.....   | 56 |
| Housing for Older People and Visiting Support Service .....        | 56 |
| Home-Link lettings .....   | 56 |
| Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours ..... | 56 |
| Housing & Council Tax Benefits.....                                | 56 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Bins, recycling, street-cleaning .....   | 57 |
| Bulky waste collection .....             | 57 |
| Report tenancy fraud.....                | 57 |
| Report anti-social behaviour .....       | 57 |
| Noise complaints.....                    | 57 |
| Council emergencies out of hours.....    | 57 |
| To complain about council services ..... | 57 |
| Council's contractors on estates .....   | 58 |
| TSG Services .....                       | 58 |
| Goshen communal cleaning.....            | 58 |
| Hi-Spec window cleaning .....            | 58 |
| Suicide Awareness .....                  | 58 |

## Editorial

From David Greening, Head of Housing Services



Welcome to the Spring edition of Open Door.

It brings you the results of the recent Residents' Satisfaction Survey, showing how you currently rate each aspect of your housing service. Coming editions of Open

Door will publish the specific improvements that service areas are making in response to your feedback.

We have a major focus again this time on help for the cost of living crisis. This edition brings you dozens of types of financial aid, from grants for families, discounts on energy bills and help with debts, to eating well on a budget, free food if needed, and much more.

This edition also brings you an overview of our sheltered housing schemes and their bright, modern apartments around the city. These schemes provide support and security for older people who want to live as actively and independently as possible. Interviews with residents convey why they enjoy the lifestyle there. Why not get in touch to see if one of our sheltered schemes might suit you as you get older, or someone you know?

With Spring finally arriving, you'll see here a wide range of fitness and wellness activities provided for free by the Council's sports and community teams. There really is something for everyone, from getting back to an activity you used to do, to going on gentle group walks that support your mental health.

We also show you the projects delivered in the past year by our Estate Improvement Scheme, a £5 million investment to improve estates over five years. There is new fencing, lighting, security, bike storage, recycling facilities, landscaping... The article shows who to contact if you have a suggestion to improve communal areas at your own estate or flat block. And we tell you too about the 'Sustainable City' grants of up to £10,000 that the Council is offering to community groups who are taking action locally to tackle the effects of climate change.

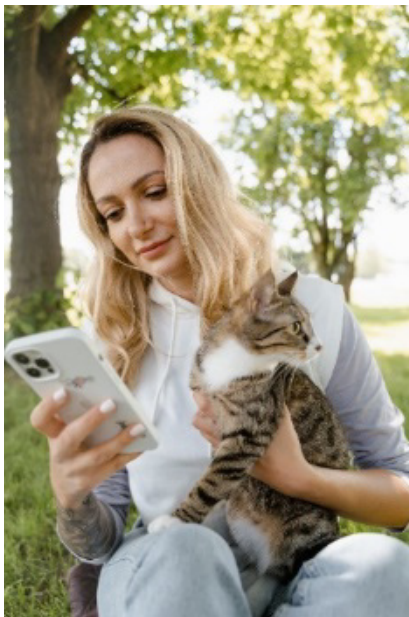
Finally, towards the end of this edition we offer a summary of what residents have achieved through their involvement and engagement with the housing service over the past year. It shows over 40 different service areas that residents have helped to design, monitor or improve from a resident-centered perspective. It shows how you

too can influence your services in ways that suit your lifestyle. We look forward to building further on these collaborations with you over the year ahead.

With best wishes,

David Greening

## **Receive Open Door electronically**



Why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper? It's easy to read on any device with wifi, at the same time saving on paper and carbon footprint. To receive it by email instead of post, visit <https://camcit.co/opendooremail>

One copy of Open Door is sent to each council home. If you'd like to request another copy for a joint tenant, please email [opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk)

An editorial panel of council tenants and leaseholders help to select and edit the content of every edition of Open Door, to ensure it continues to reflect residents' needs and interests. To get involved, email [opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk)



## **At the Council save time, do it online**

You can now access most of the City Council's services directly online, using them whenever it's convenient for you, without needing to phone or email.

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts) to access our secure portals. Or just use the search box at [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk) to find the service you need.

Or you can visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk) and click on the Online Accounts option at the top right. It takes you to a range of portals where you can, for instance:

- manage your Council Tax and benefits accounts
- check your balance, set up a direct debit, update your details and more

Through the Council Housing Portal in there you can check your rent, request a repair, and much more. Other portals let you do things like check planning applications, apply for council housing and so on.

Most of our other services also have online forms so you can apply directly for what you need, or report something to us. And we are working to provide yet more services online soon.

### **Using your online Housing Account?**

You can register for your own personal Housing Account online at <https://housing.cambridge.gov.uk/housing/www> On there, you can:

- request a repair, booking your appointment slot
- follow the progress of your repair

- check your account balance and print statements
- make payments
- communicate with council staff

A recent survey showed that over a third of council tenants in Cambridge have already registered for their own private Housing Account online, and are using it regularly. 70% of those users say they find it an easy way to access services. (14% of them find it 'neither easy nor difficult', and 16% are still getting used to it.)

Note that the Council's Customer Service Centre at Mandela House in Regent Street is open from Wednesday to Friday for pre-booked appointments only, 9am to 5.15pm. And you can still phone the Council at 01223-457000, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.15pm.

## **Get online for free or at little cost**

A quarter of council tenants don't have internet access (versus 4% of the wider public). They tend to be older: some aren't interested, others can't afford it or don't know how. If you don't have access to an internet device or are unsure how to use one, Cambridge Online can give you the help you need. Phone 01223-300407 or visit <https://cambridgeonline.org.uk> Or drop in to see them at Brown's Field Community Centre, Chesterton, Weds, 1-2pm or at The Hub, Barnwell Rd, Abbey, Thurs, 10am-noon. And see the three offers in the articles below for:

- a free loan of a tablet internet device from the Council
- free data for those on benefits
- other big discounts on internet costs for those on benefits

## Benefits and 'Social Tariffs'

Those receiving Universal Credit can get discounts on internet costs. Called Social Tariffs, these deals:

- cost just £10-£20 per month
- provide fast, unlimited broadband
- have either no setup costs, or very little
- may be offered by your current provider who may switch you to it for free (if they don't, switch for free to a provider that does offer a Social Tariff)
- can't rise in cost during the contract, which you end any time without exit fees

You can apply for most Social Tariffs online, or phone your provider and ask to switch. Your provider might let you leave your current contract without paying a penalty fee. Some providers also offer Social Tariffs to those on benefits other than Universal Credit (eg. Pension Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, etc.).

For a trustworthy guide to switching internet providers, visit [www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs)

Note that BT and KCOM also provide cheaper phone landline tariffs for households on certain benefits. For details see the website above.

## Tablet Loan Scheme

The City Council is enabling free access to the internet for eligible council tenants, through a free tablet loan scheme. These wifi-enabled tablets are pre-loaded with 20GB of data and are loaned for 3 months initially.

The scheme is for tenants who are at risk of social exclusion, to help improve their economic situation. Using the internet can help them to access employment or benefits, for instance, or to swap utility providers. The loan period can be extended for an additional 3 months if the resident still needs the tablet for internet access.

To be eligible, the resident must be a Cambridge City Council tenant who has no access to digital equipment or wifi at home (other than smart phones), and they must be receiving Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. To apply, email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

### **Free data for those on benefits**

As well as the tablet loan scheme described above, the Council is also offering its tenants on benefits 6 months of free data for their own internet or mobile device, even if they're not borrowing a council tablet.

To receive free data from this scheme, you must currently have an O2 pay-as-you-go SIM card. (The offer will hopefully be available to users of other networks in the near future.)

Many vital services such as benefits, health care and training require you to be online. Both schools and employers also expect you to use the internet.

But with increasing pressure on the cost of living, many are struggling to afford all the data they need on their internet devices. For more information on this offer, email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

If you don't have access to a computer, tablet or smart phone or are unsure how to use them, the charity Cambridge Online can help at little or no cost to you (see the article above for details). You can phone them at 01223-300407.

## Did you know that to vote...

...at a polling station you must now show valid photo ID? (It's not needed for voting by post.) To see what to do if you don't have suitable ID, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/voter-id-in-polling-stations](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/voter-id-in-polling-stations) or email [elections@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:elections@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457048.

## Your Satisfaction Survey results



An independent company recently surveyed a broad sample of the City Council's tenants and leaseholders, to find out your opinions on aspects of your housing service. Here is an overview of some headline results, showing how many of you agreed with each statement (below, General needs means ordinary tenancies and Independent Living means sheltered tenancies).

All of Cambridge City Council's 6,770 tenants and 1,152 leaseholders were invited to take part. 1,808 residents answered the survey, online or by post, with a response rate of 23%. It's part of the national monitoring of social landlords' performance.

### Happy with landlord's service overall

General needs: 67%

Independent Living: 85%

Leaseholders: 50%

### **The Council is easy to deal with**

General needs: 69%

Independent Living: 83%

Leaseholders: 53%

### **Happy with repairs in past 12 months**

General needs: 72%

Independent Living: 91%

### **The Council provides a home that is safe**

General needs: 70%

Independent Living: 90%

Leaseholders: 66%

### **Communal areas are kept clean and well maintained**

General needs: 56%

Independent Living: 85%

Leaseholders: 40%

## **Tenants are treated fairly & with respect**

General needs: 66%

Independent Living: 89%

Leaseholders: 58%

## **The Council keeps residents informed**

General needs: 59%

Independent Living: 80%

Leaseholders: 56%

## **Happy with approach to handling complaints**

General needs: 29%

Independent Living: 49%

Leaseholders: 2%4

## **The Council contributes positively to the neighbourhood**

General needs: 55%

Independent Living: 77%

Leaseholders: 44%

## Using residents' feedback to improve services

By national standards, residents' response rate is considered about average: almost 1 in 4 of all the Council's tenants and leaseholders chose to reply to the survey, which statistically is considered an accurate cross-view of opinion. (A detailed overview and analysis of the results will be available later in the Spring at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement-strategies-updates-and-reports](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement-strategies-updates-and-reports))

Mirroring national trends, the satisfaction levels of general council tenants in Cambridge have, unfortunately, dropped several percentage points since the 2020 survey and pre-Covid times. For instance, their satisfaction with the landlord's overall service has dropped by 5% since 2020, and 4% fewer of them consider the Council easy to deal with. This closely mirrors national averages, where "Overall tenant satisfaction has dropped by five percentage points" since 2020, as reported by Housemark.

Here in Cambridge, satisfaction with the 'nuts & bolts' service areas of repairs and of home safety come out highest, as does the sense of being treated with respect. Nationally, these are also the service areas scoring highest among tenants at the moment. But both in Cambridge and nationally, there is lower satisfaction around areas like the landlord listening to and acting on your views, and around the handling of complaints.

Over the months ahead, each edition of Open Door will bring you updates on the actions that the Council is taking to improve satisfaction levels in specific service areas, based on your feedback. Your elected tenant and leaseholder representatives will help hold the City Council to account to meet those commitments and make those visible improvements.



## Do you know the Council's Housing For Older People?



### Moving to an Independent Living flat

Have you thought about where and how you would like to live, if you need to downsize from your current home as you get older? Though some can feel anxious about it, it's important to plan and make this move while you are still able: it will enable you to live independently for longer.

Did you know that as part of its social housing, the City Council provides a range of comfortable, convenient apartments for rent in 13 Sheltered Housing schemes around the city?

(And note that the Council's Under-Occupation Incentive Scheme gives a financial reward to tenants who move from a home that has over time become too large for them.)

The Council's sheltered schemes are secure housing communities that empower you to live independently, but with the reassurance of extra security, support and services on site. You can either live there completely independently, or you can receive a tailor-made package of care and support there. Sheltered housing is available to anyone over 60 who:

- has been living or working in Cambridge, or has relatives here
- needs support to live independently and would benefit from the security of sheltered housing
- or needs assistance with managing their care and support

Nine of the Council's sheltered schemes are classed as 'indoor'. There, residents' front doors open onto a hallway, with security at the collective front door of the building. At other schemes, residents' front doors open directly to the outside. Most homes have one bedroom, though some have two. Many are adapted for disabilities.

Some individual homes have their own garden, but all schemes have a communal garden, often with flats arranged around it as a courtyard. Cats and dogs are allowed with written permission (not needed for assistance dogs). And all communal areas of the schemes are cleaned and maintained by the Council.

## **Typical social activities**

The Council's Sheltered Schemes are enjoying a new partnership with the Cambridge United Trust, who are offering older people:

- wellbeing walks around Cambridge
- 'Walking Football' at 10am on Thursdays at Abbey Leisure Centre
- Afternoon Tea every third Thursday of the month at Abbey Stadium

They will also be visiting sheltered schemes quarterly, focusing on:

- physical health, through strength and balance classes
- guidance on mental health and wellbeing

- social inclusion with activities such as games and quizzes

Residents from other schemes are invited to join in with the sessions at schemes where Cambridge United Trust are visiting. For more information visit [www.cuctrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.cuctrust.co.uk/whats-on)

## **Ditchburn Place, for extra care**



Ditchburn Place on Mill Road (above) includes 36 'Extra Care' flats. Residents in these flats receive on-site care, are served three meals per day, and have their flats cleaned and their laundry done for them.

To qualify for these flats requires a Social Care assessment by Cambridgeshire County Council (see [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/adults/organising-care-and-support/care-needs-assessment](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/adults/organising-care-and-support/care-needs-assessment) or phone 0345-045-5202).

The excellent location of Ditchburn Place, half-way along Mill Road, puts it at the centre of the local community and shops. It is also within walking distance of the city centre, the train station, and a bus route to Addenbrokes hospital. It is fronted by beautiful private gardens that screen it away from the street.

Ditchburn's comfortable one-bedroom flats include their own private bathroom, kitchen, lounge and dining area. The scheme also has a communal dining

area and lounge, as well as its communal gardens and courtyards. Services provided at the scheme include a laundry, disabled toilets, wet room shower and on-site parking that has some disabled spaces.

For more information or to make an enquiry, email [independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457199 or follow Cambridge Older People's Housing on Facebook.

## **Increasing care as your needs increase: an example**

Mr K. was already a tenant in the Council's sheltered housing. Unfortunately his arthritis became more severe, affecting his mobility and causing him to fall out of bed at times. As his needs increased, his Independent Living Facilitator and other staff were able to design for him a tailor-made package of care that now includes fall-detecting technology. It automatically sends emergency assistance to him if he falls in his flat. This means that he can stay living in his own sheltered flat rather than having to move to a nursing home. And he has avoided being re-admitted to hospital.

## **Life at sheltered schemes**

### **Support from staff**

Each of the City Council's 13 sheltered schemes is managed by an Independent Living Facilitator (ILF), who is the residents' hands-on point of contact for everything to do with life at the scheme. They make regular contact with all the scheme's residents, and keep up to date with their needs.

The ILF works with all new residents to establish the amount and type of contact and support they need, and create an individual support plan for them. The ILF can also advise about or help to arrange any other services a resident may need, including for example around:

- managing their tenancy
- managing their budget, and paying rent and council tax
- attending appointments or social activities
- settling into their new home
- reporting housing issues
- staying physically and mentally healthy

Further support can also be arranged for short periods, such as following an illness, bereavement or hospitalisation. And residents can receive visits from external carers delivering care or support services, just as they would do in the wider community.

A 'handyman' also visits each sheltered scheme regularly, to help residents with any small repairs or alterations to their own flat.

## **Events and activities**

Each sheltered scheme runs a busy calendar of events and activities, with all residents invited to join in. Sample activities include bingo, tea and cakes, craft groups, art groups and exercise. Activities are either free or low-cost.

You can apply for sheltered housing on the Home-Link website at [www.home-link.org.uk](http://www.home-link.org.uk) or by phoning the Council at 01223-457000. When a property becomes available for you, staff will meet you to discuss your housing, support and care requirements. If your needs are too great for our sheltered schemes, we will advise on other housing options.

Housing benefit can contribute towards the rent, so we also offer a financial assessment to ensure you'll receive all financial support that you are entitled to.

For more information, email [independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk), phone 01223-457199 or follow Cambridge Older People's Housing on Facebook.

## Tenants' experiences



Mr F. is a 90-year-old widower who had lived for 50 years in his three-bedroom council house with his wife and family. His daughter suggested that he move into sheltered housing, as he had no family living locally.

Naturally, he loved his home which was full of memories. He also enjoyed his garden, and was reluctant to move. But he agreed to view a ground-floor flat with a private patio and small garden, in a sheltered scheme closer to his family.

And on reflection, he saw that he would have a better quality of life there, overall. Support staff helped him with the practicalities of making the move. He settled in quickly, made new friends, and now very much enjoys the communal lounge outside his flat and the scheme's daily social activities. By contrast, he would have been all alone in his previous home.

He enjoys tending the patio and little garden that his sheltered flat opens onto, transforming it with plant-pots of blossoms and with seating. It is more manageable than the garden in his old home, so he now enjoys his gardening even more than he did before. Mr F. describes moving into sheltered housing as 'the best decision I ever made'.

Another tenant, Mrs L., was living in a sheltered scheme but after several weeks in hospital, she now needed a lot more help in her sheltered flat than before. So staff designed a care package that included regular visits and helping her with taking her daily medication.

They also arranged care workers to help with her weekly shopping. And they arranged for the Red Cross transport service to take her to her hospital appointments. These support services meant she could continue living independently in her own sheltered flat, and didn't need to move to a care home.

## **Help for energy bills and the cost of living**

### **Help for families**

#### **Free school meals**

Children in homes receiving certain benefits may be entitled to free school meals, worth up to £450 per year per child. Secondary school children may also receive help with school transport costs. Apply at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/help-with-school-learning-costs/free-school-meals](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/help-with-school-learning-costs/free-school-meals)

## **Free childcare and meals in school holidays**

Those receiving free school meals can also receive free childcare and meals during school holidays. Visit the 'Holiday Activities and Food Programme' link on the webpage above.

## **Free childcare**

Visit <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs> for information on:

- 15 or 30 hours of free childcare, and tax-free childcare
- Child Benefit
- £500 help with maternity costs

See also <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/childcare-and-early-learning>

## **Free school uniforms**

The organisation Grow Kids provides free 'pre-loved' clothes in good condition for ages 0-10 years, and some school uniforms. Visit [www.facebook.com/CambridgeGrowKids](http://www.facebook.com/CambridgeGrowKids)

Trumpington Kids Clothes Hub offers the same: visit them at [www.trumpingtonkidsclotheshub.co.uk](http://www.trumpingtonkidsclotheshub.co.uk)

Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS) provide advice, grants and practical support to households under exceptional pressure. They can provide supermarket vouchers, energy vouchers, new white goods, decorating packs, beds, mattresses, recycled white goods and other furniture. See page 53 near the end of this edition for eligibility criteria and contact details.



## **Household Support Fund - £100**

Up to £100 is available to help with energy bills and food, for those in immediate financial hardship. For eligibility and applications, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/household-support-fund](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/household-support-fund) Or email [community.resilience@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:community.resilience@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457000.

## **Free food when needed**

### **Free food and meals**

Some foodbanks require referrals, but other food hubs don't. To view the wide range of options in Cambridge, visit <https://cambridgecity.foodbank.org.uk>

Council tenants struggling to afford food can request free food vouchers from the Council's Housing service. Phone 01223-457070 or email [incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk)

Healthy Start Vouchers give help to buy fruit, vegetables and milk for those on a low income who are pregnant or have a child under four. (If you use them at Sainsbury's, they'll top them up by £2 a week, currently until April). Visit [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

Cambridge Community Kitchen provides free hot, hearty, vegan meals for anyone who needs them - they can even be delivered to your home. Visit <https://cckitchen.uk>

FoodCycle Cambridge also invites anyone for a warm meal - just drop into the Baptist Church, St Andrew's Street from 12.30pm on Saturdays. You'll be greeted warmly by friendly volunteers. For more information visit <https://foodcycle.org.uk/location/foodcycle-cambridge>

The OLIO app lets you request free food that would otherwise have been wasted. To use it, visit <https://olioex.com/food-waste-in/united-kingdom/cambridge>

For £3, The EDGE Café offers a really hearty, healthy meal every Wednesday. They also run a Food Hub from 10-11.30am Mon-Sat, where visitors can collect fresh, free food that would otherwise have gone to waste.

Or for a warm welcome any time at this cafe that supports ongoing recovery from addictions, drop in Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm. To see their free support groups, visit <https://theedgecafecambridge.org/index.php> or [www.facebook.com/theedgecafecambridge](http://www.facebook.com/theedgecafecambridge)

## **Claim all the help you are due**

### **Help for paying rent**



If your income is low, you may be eligible for help with rent, by applying for Universal Credit. And those of pension-age on a low income may be entitled to Housing Benefit. Use the Benefit Calculator on the Council's website to see how much Universal Credit you could receive, plus any Council Tax reductions or other benefits. It's at <https://cambridge.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

If you receive Universal Credit or Housing Benefit that don't cover your full rent and you are struggling, apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment. Email [benefits@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457762.

## **Reduced Council Tax**

Those on low incomes and single people may be eligible for reductions in their Council Tax. Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tax](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tax)

## **Claim all benefits due to you**

The charity Turn to Us helps people access all the benefits, grants and other help available to them. Visit <https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk>

The MoneyHelper website also shows how to claim all benefits you're entitled to, which might include Pension Credit, Carer's Allowance, the Marriage allowance, or help with tax bills. Visit <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/benefits>

## **Benefits loans**

You may be eligible for a Budgeting Loan if you've been on certain benefits for six months. You will have to pay back the amount you borrow, with repayments taken automatically from your benefits. Visit [www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits](http://www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits)

## **Are your wages correct?**

Use the National Minimum Wage Calculator online to ensure your pay (and deductions like income tax, national insurance, etc.) are correct. Visit [www.gov.uk/am-i-getting-minimum-wage](http://www.gov.uk/am-i-getting-minimum-wage)

To challenge any mistakes, Citizens' Advice can help you: phone 0344-848-7979 or 01223-222660, email [caba@cambridgecab.org.uk](mailto:caba@cambridgecab.org.uk) or visit [www.cambridgecab.org.uk](http://www.cambridgecab.org.uk)

## **Travel costs**

If on Universal Credit, you may be eligible for a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card that gives up to 50% off train travel. Phone 0800-169-0190 or ask at your local Jobcentre.

## **Get one to one help at your Housing Service**

If you can't afford your rent, contact your Housing service's Financial Inclusion Officer today. They can:

- help you budget to avoid debt
- make a plan to clear your rent arrears or housing-related debts
- ensure you receive all benefits you are entitled to
- help you apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment

To contact them, phone 01223-457070.

## **Help for prioritising your bills**

The online Bill Prioritiser tool can help you prioritise your bills and payments into the right order. It will also explain what to do if you're struggling, before you miss making an all-important payment. Visit <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/cost-of-living/bill-prioritiser.html>

## **Get help to sort out debts**

### **Debt and money advice**

Debt can happen to anyone. But don't despair - please use the range of free support that is available to help you manage your debts, reduce monthly payments on them, and eventually become debt-free.

Citizens' Advice give reliable advice on debt and money problems. They can also offer help with form filling and letter writing. Visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or [www.cambridgecab.org.uk](http://www.cambridgecab.org.uk), or phone Freephone 08082-787808.

Step Change give trustworthy free advice on debt and money management at [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) Or phone 0800-138-1111, Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm or Sat, 8am-4pm. Online advice is at [www.stepchange.org/setting-expectations.aspx](http://www.stepchange.org/setting-expectations.aspx)

### **Avoid loan sharks**

Please beware loan sharks, who lend money at unmanageable interest rates. Report them confidentially online at <https://www.gov.uk/report-loan-shark>

### **Use Credit Unions**

Instead, Credit Unions are the safe way to borrow small amounts. Check out Eastern Savings & Loans Credit Union at [www.eslcu.co.uk](http://www.eslcu.co.uk) or phone them at 03336-000690.

MoneyHelper website helps those on a tight income, helping you to plan a personal budget and manage your spending, with personalised tips for making savings. Visit [www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/cost-of-living/squeezed-income.html](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/cost-of-living/squeezed-income.html) Try their Personal Budget Planner at [www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/budget-planner](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/budget-planner)

New Horizons offers those who are unemployed or not working a range of hands-on help with money issues, getting online, and moving towards training or work. They can give up to 20 hours of face-to-face help, including home visits. For information see <https://makingmoneycount.org.uk/about-us/new-horizons> or email [newhorizons@chsgroup.org.uk](mailto:newhorizons@chsgroup.org.uk) or phone 0300-1113555.

### **Mental health and debts**

Breathing Space is a government scheme for those with mental health problems who have debts. It keeps creditors off your back while you receive debt advice and solutions for getting out of debt long-term. For up to 60 days, the scheme prevents

creditors from chasing you or adding further interest or charges to your debts. If you are being treated for a mental health crisis, the scheme can last a month longer.

The type of debts involved can include loans, 'payday' loans, overdrafts, overdue utility bills, rent arrears, council tax debts, or debts on credit cards or store cards.

Ask your doctor or healthcare worker to refer you. You'll need a signed referral form from them. You can also start applying by yourself online at <https://breathingspace.zentsocloud.com/AdvicePro/BreathingSpaceReferral>

## Get fit and active for free this Spring



### Free & low-cost physical activities

The City Council's Active Lifestyles & Recreation team provide free or low-cost activities around the city. There really is something for everyone, including families, women, girls, older people, and those with long-term medical conditions or mental ill health. Why not try an activity that's new to you, or one you haven't done for a while?

These two pages give an overview but to stay up to date, sign up to their free monthly e-newsletter at <https://mailchi.mp/cambridge/getmovingcam>

**Get Families Moving** – This service provides a variety of short activity courses that get the whole family active together, at a low cost. To date, the service has provided these courses in climbing, ice skating, racket sports and fishing, with specific activities for family members with a disability. For courses available this Spring, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport-and-fitness-for-families](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport-and-fitness-for-families)

**Healthy You** – This programme offers free support and activity opportunities to anyone who is currently inactive and wishes to make positive changes to their lifestyle. Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/healthy-you-cambridge](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/healthy-you-cambridge)

**Exercise Referral** - This service provides a personalised exercise programme for adults with long term medical conditions or disabilities. It is available at six sites across the city, at a low cost. For information on how you could be referred, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/startup](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/startup)

**Invigorate** – This programme is for those who may be struggling with their mental health, and wishing to improve their wellbeing through regular activity. Activities are either free or low-cost. They include sessions in T'ai Chi, multi-sports, yoga and health walks. For more information, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/fitness-activities-to-help-improve-your-wellbeing](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/fitness-activities-to-help-improve-your-wellbeing)

For more information on all these and other activities provided by the Active Lifestyles & Recreation team, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport), email [sport@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:sport@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457532. Or follow the Get Moving Cambridge team at [www.facebook.com/getmovingcam](http://www.facebook.com/getmovingcam) or on Instagram [@Getmovingcambridge](https://www.instagram.com/Getmovingcambridge)

## **Free online & home-based activities**

The Council's Active Lifestyles team also offer a variety of free, online activity courses that you can take part in from the comfort of your own home. They include free courses in programmes such as Return to Fitness, Relax & Unwind, Workout@Home, Walk Before You Run and Wellbeing Yoga.

They are available for everybody to access, and require minimum equipment. To see the current programmes and sign up for free, visit <https://getmovingcam.thinkific.com/collections>

The service also has a YouTube channel with taster sessions in a variety of activities for you to sample at any time. These include tasters in a variety of styles of exercise classes, meditation, cook-along videos and breathing exercises. Subscribe for free at [www.youtube.com/@getmovingcambridge2753](http://www.youtube.com/@getmovingcambridge2753)

## **Eat well on a tight budget**

A new, regular Open Door series from Dr Richard Hoffman, Registered Nutritionist, University of Hertfordshire

Studies now show that for health and long life, eating healthily is even more important than exercise and not smoking. Improving your diet even at age 60 - by eating a lot more fruit, wholegrains, pulses and nuts - will add an average of 8.5 years to your life! You just reduce meat, sugar and white-flour products, replacing a lot of them with the foods above.

It can seem hard to change our eating habits even a little, as some are ingrained since childhood. But you can build on familiar tastes, tweaking them to be healthier. For instance, so-called 'Mediterranean' food is the healthiest in the world. Its dishes are simple, cheap, tasty and extremely healthy.



So try the following 'tweak' recipe, as a delicious main meal for all the family. It looks great too, brought to the table in its pan so everyone can serve themselves.

### **'Bacon & Egg' Mediterranean-style...**

What could be more traditionally British than bacon, eggs and tomatoes? But with a few tweaks, the Mediterranean version transforms this into a cheap, healthy, filling meal that's full of nutrients (and no longer high in saturated fat and salt).

Cut 2 to 3 medium potatoes into half-inch pieces. Fry in a frying pan in olive oil on medium heat, lid on, until soft (about 10 minutes). Remove them from the pan.

Chop an onion and red pepper. Fry them for a few minutes until soft. Add the fried potatoes back into the pan with them, seasoning well with salt and pepper.

Add a half or full tin of chopped tomatoes, a cupful of peas (frozen or tinned are fine), and a sprinkle of paprika if you like it. Once the peas are cooked, make two or three hollows in the food in the frying pan and gently break an egg into each hollow. Cover and cook for a few minutes until the eggs are done.

This dinner looks so good and is so filling that no-one will even notice it's meat-free, nor how inexpensive it was!

## **Healthy Home Cooking videos**

The free online Healthy Home Cooking videos will get you confident in the kitchen, saving money and easily cooking up new favourite dishes for yourself and all the family. These free videos guide you through cooking five different dishes that are easy, cheap, tasty and healthy.

The videos make it really easy to follow the steps in your own kitchen. They also give downloadable recipes for from 1 to 4 people, depending on how many you are cooking for. The recipes also include a simple shopping list of ingredients for all 5

recipes, with guideline prices. Why not have a go at one of the dishes online at <https://getmovingcam.thinkific.com/courses/healthy-home-cooking>

## **Free guided walks**

As guidance from the NHS puts it: 'Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get more active, lose weight and become healthier. Sometimes overlooked as a form of exercise, walking briskly can help you build stamina, burn excess calories and make your heart healthier. You do not have to walk for hours. A brisk 10-minute daily walk has lots of health benefits...'

## **Free Wellbeing Walks**

These are short, friendly group walks that help you become and stay active. Led by trained volunteers, they are free to join and everyone is welcome. These weekly walks are led by Cambridge United Community Trust on:

- Tuesdays, 11am, from Arbury Community Centre, CB4 2LD
- Wednesdays, 2pm, from Abbey Leisure Complex, CB5 8NT
- Fridays, 11am, from Trumpington Park and Ride, CB2 9FT

Email [communitytrust@cambridge-united.co.uk](mailto:communitytrust@cambridge-united.co.uk) for more details.

## **Wellbeing Walks run by GP surgeries**

These free walks are led by Wellbeing Coaches from local GP surgeries on:

- the second Thursday of the month, 2pm, from The Edge Café (351 Mill Road, CB1 3DF) to CoFarm off Barnwell Road, and back
- the fourth Wednesday of the month, 1.30pm, from The Edge Café to Romsey Recreation Ground, and back

No need to book in advance for any of the Wellbeing Walks above - you could just turn up! For more on Wellbeing Walks, visit the Ramblers website at <https://beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/wellbeing-walks>

### **Mental Health Mates Walks**

Mental Health Mates are peer support groups run by people who have experienced their own mental health issues. They meet regularly to walk, connect, feel supported and share their experiences in a kindly environment. To find out more or join a Mental Health Mates walking group, visit [www.mentalhealthmates.co.uk/get-involved](http://www.mentalhealthmates.co.uk/get-involved)

For more information, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport), email [sport@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:sport@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457532. Or follow Get Moving Cambridge on Facebook, Instagram or Youtube.

### **Swimming and outdoor fun**

Swimming is one of the best workouts for body and mind. It exercises your whole body gently, while also being relaxing and refreshing. There are low-cost and even free options at the city's council-owned pools. For example, those on benefits and the over-60s enjoy half-price swimming and sports with a Pay & Play Concession Card.

Available at Parkside and Abbey pools, Cherry Hinton Village Centre, King's Hedges Learner Pool or Jesus Green Lido, the card costs £5 per year for adults, £2.50 per child.

Pay & Play Student Cards, at £7.50 per year, give up to 35% discount for full-time students. Standard Pay & Play cards - for those not on benefits nor over 60 - still give up to 30% discount. They cost £10 for adults per year, and £5 per child.

But at weekends, the Adult & Child sessions at the city's council-owned pools give free swimming for up to 2 children with every paying adult.

And as the weather improves, why not get outside for a regular dose of fresh air and exercise? There are lots of opportunities to get active in the city's green and open spaces, including free to use public tennis courts and table tennis tables, green gyms, trim trails, and running and walking trails.

There are weekly free Park Runs on Coldhams Common and Storey Field, and a free Park Tennis session on Jesus Green. For families, the free 'Love Exploring' smartphone app provides a variety of fun, augmented-reality trails on many green spaces in the city. These include Nightingale Recreation ground, Cherry Hinton Hall, Trumpington Meadows Country Park and Nuns Way.

For more information on the variety of free opportunities for fitness and where they are located in the city, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport)

## Your Housing Service

### Improving your estate



The Council has set aside £5 million over five years for improvements to the communal areas of the city's council estates. Proposals for this Estate Improvement

Schemes often come from residents, and all residents affected are consulted.

Examples of improvement projects to date have included:

- new lighting
- storage for bikes and mobility-scooters
- more secure bin stores and tidier recycling facilities
- resurfaced pathways that are safer and more attractive
- works and fittings that increase security, such as new gates and locks
- others that prevent anti-social behaviour, for instance by closing off unwanted access

Over 100 such projects have already been completed around the city, giving estates a major facelift and investment. If you have suggestions to improve your estate, even if different from those above, please email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

Note that proposed projects must meet at least one of the following needs:

- reducing crime or anti-social behaviour
- making a visible and positive difference to the aesthetics of the estate
- contributing to strengthening the estate community
- improving residents' health, safety or wellbeing
- spending money now that will save money later

Projects must also add value to the estate, rather than just being a temporary change such as new foliage. And they can't involve planned maintenance that the Council will be doing anyway.

For more information on this Estate Improvement Scheme, or to read an annual report overviewing a year's completed projects, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/estate-improvement-scheme](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/estate-improvement-scheme)

To propose or discuss an idea for the scheme on your own estate, please do email your Resident Involvement Officer at [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

## **Neighbourhood Clean-Up Days**

Do you have clutter, rubbish or unwanted items lying around in your garden, sheds or home? Fancy having a thorough clear-out for free, without having to pay any costs or travel beyond your own street?

Did you know that the Council runs free Neighbourhood Clean-Up Days around the city's council estates? They bring free skips and recycling bins to estates to help clear up communal areas, and to enable residents to have a free clear-out of their own homes or gardens too.

Over 25 of these events were run around the estates last year, and they remain extremely popular with local residents. There's a fun atmosphere as everyone finally gets down to getting rid of those unwanted items, without having to pay fees to get them taken away.

The events, organised by the Council's Streets & Open Spaces team, take place in the mornings. Local residents receive a flyer letting them know when and where their local Clean-Up Day will be happening.

You then bring your household and garden waste to the free disposal skips and bins on the day. Recycling Champions are usually present, to answer your questions about what you can recycle.

And there's usually an ever-popular 'Take It Or Leave It' stall where you can drop off or claim for yourself a wide range of unwanted items for free.

The skips can take anything from sofas and wardrobes to metal, timber and rubbish for landfill. Council staff can help unload cars into the skips, and will help sort materials that can be recycled. But remember to bring your waste all the way to the skips - you could be prosecuted for flytipping if you just leave it in a public place.

Residents with disabilities may be able to book for council staff to carry their items to the skips for them.

For more information, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/neighbourhood-clean-up-events](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/neighbourhood-clean-up-events), email [housing.officer@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:housing.officer@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457070 or 01223-458084.

# Tackling climate change

## Plant a tree for Cambridge



Cambridge city has a target to increase its 'urban forest', which basically means the overall number of trees in the city. Currently, 17% of Cambridge is covered by tree canopies: the task is to increase that to 19%. To achieve this target, we need you, residents of Cambridge, to help plant more trees please.

The City Council manages more than 32,000 trees in the city's streets and open spaces, and are planting many more. But the city also includes about 40,000 household gardens, and to get new trees in there requires the help of residents.

Planting a tree in your garden will make a positive, immediate contribution to tackling climate change. It provides a habitat for pollinating insects and other wildlife, and increases the city's canopy cover, which boosts biodiversity for everyone.

Even if you don't have any space in which you could plant a tree yourself, you could give a new tree as a gift to a friend or family member.



## **Trees for Babies scheme**

If you are the parent or grandparent of a small child, the Council can give you a free tree to plant for them. You must live in Cambridge and have a child or grandchild aged four or under. The tree can mark a baby's birth, or celebrate an adoption, or commemorate the loss of a child. If you don't have your own garden or other space for a new tree, you could plant it for instance at your workplace, your child's school or nursery, or in a friend or relative's garden. For information, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/free-trees-for-babies](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/free-trees-for-babies)

## **Be counted in the Tree Challenge**

Whenever you plant any new tree, please make sure to add it to the city's interactive Tree Map online at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/help-us-map-the-citys-trees](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/help-us-map-the-citys-trees). The Council has put into the map the trees it manages on public land - but there are over 200,000 more trees in the rest of the city! You can help map them by adding the trees in your own garden. For instance, there is a particular need to map the city's ash trees. The webpage above lets you download an easy app for adding trees.

## **Join Cambridge Tree Challenge**

If you use the app at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/help-us-map-the-citys-trees](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/help-us-map-the-citys-trees) you could win a year's membership of the Botanic Gardens for two! Just enter the date you planted your tree, upload a photo, and include the hashtag #camtreechallenge in the notes box.

The scheme offers a range of tree varieties that will suit most gardens in Cambridge, no matter how much or how little space you have to work with. Think in advance about where you would like to plant your new tree, how much room you have and the size the tree will grow to. Try to find a space where your new tree can grow to its fullest potential without needing regular pruning or becoming a nuisance in the future.

For further advice on how to choose, plant and look after your tree, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/plant-a-tree-in-your-garden](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/plant-a-tree-in-your-garden) Or phone the Council at 01223-457000 or follow Cambridge Canopy Project on Twitter or Cambridge Trees on Instagram.

## **Eco-grants for community groups**

Did you know that community groups and voluntary organisations can receive grants of up to £10,000 from the City Council for activities that help tackle or manage climate change? Could a local group that you're involved in apply?

Called Sustainable City Grants, these grants are to help groups deliver the objectives of the city's Climate Change Strategy, 2021-26 (available at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/apply-for-a-sustainable-city-grant](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/apply-for-a-sustainable-city-grant)). Your group or organisation must:

- be a voluntary or community organisation in Cambridge city
- have a bank account
- have a written purpose, mission or constitution

The project or activity funded must be completed a year and a half after application deadlines, and must help with one of the following issues in Cambridge:

- reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions from homes or businesses
- reducing consumption of resources, reducing waste, or increasing recycling
- promoting greener modes of transport
- encouraging climate-friendly behaviour change

- increasing sustainable food
- increased use of sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling, public transport or car sharing
- supporting residents or businesses to adapt to any of the above
- supporting residents, particularly the vulnerable and those on low incomes, to handle impacts of climate change, such as heatwaves, flooding or water shortage

These Sustainable City Grants cannot fund capital costs (ie. fixed, one-time expenses for assets such as buildings, fixtures, vehicles, equipment, etc.). Nor can they be used to fund research or feasibility studies.

### **Apply for a Sustainable City Grant**

If you think your organisation or community group may meet the eligibility criteria, and your project clearly meets funding priorities listed above, please email [grants@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:grants@cambridge.gov.uk) to request an application form. The deadline for applications is usually in the autumn, for projects that will be completed a year and a half later.

Sample projects funded have included...

- Workshops teaching residents about energy efficiency
- composting workshops
- a Sustainable Fashion Festival
- promoting a healthy, affordable Sustainable Diet that has minimal impact on the planet

- upcycling old pallets into raised beds for growing vegetables...

So get your thinking cap on! There are so many different ways that projects can contribute to making the city more sustainable, and meeting the grants' criteria. Or if your project doesn't quite fit the criteria, please do get in touch to enquire about the range of other grants available.

For general enquiries, email [sustainablecity@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:sustainablecity@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457176. To request or submit an application form, email [grants@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:grants@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457875.

## **Resident Involvement**

### **Residents' achievements in the past year**



In keeping with government guidelines, the City Council maintains a Resident Involvement Strategy that resident representatives help to design, and continue to oversee. It defines and guarantees the range and quality of opportunities that tenants and leaseholders have to influence their Housing Service.

You can view the full Resident Involvement Strategy (2021-2024 version) on the Council's website at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement-strategies-updates-and-reports](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement-strategies-updates-and-reports)

In the past year alone, residents influenced over 40 housing-related council services. At the overarching, strategic level, these included:

- the budget of the Housing Service
- the city's Housing Strategy, for building council homes and affordable housing
- plans to boost biodiversity on council estates and land
- strategies for reducing carbon emissions across the Housing Service

Among the day to day running of council estates, residents influenced:

- improvements to the Council's Customer Service Centre
- tenancy management, including the basic 3 R's of council housing - rents, repairs and re-lets
- estate services like communal cleaning, window-cleaning and grass-cutting
- managing residents' car parking
- the Estate Improvement Scheme that funds projects to improve estate

environments

When a specific service is outsourced to be delivered by a contractor, residents

help to select contractors such as:

- a maintenance contractor for estates
- a communal cleaning contractor

And whether delivered by the Council or by its contractors, resident representatives monitor how well each service is performing. They also review complaints about services, to see whether the Council has responded with improvements.

Interested in a particular service area? To have your say in a way that suits you, email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

## **Your elected resident reps**

All council tenants and leaseholders citywide receive a vote to elect their 6 resident representatives, who will champion their interests on the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee. Decisions they debated or voted on at the Committee's January meeting included:

- the budget for the Housing Service for 2023-24
- new homes the Council is building
- getting vacated properties re-let efficiently
- grants to organisations preventing homelessness
- resident consultations on a major redevelopment at East Road

- meeting legal requirements on safety and maintenance of council homes
- a Housing Ombudsman case

To contact your elected resident reps at any time, email [hsc.residents@gmail.com](mailto:hsc.residents@gmail.com) or phone 01223-458323 to leave a message. For minutes of all their meetings, visit <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx> and click 'Housing Scrutiny Committee'.

## Enter Residents' Garden Competition



This year again, council tenants and leaseholders will be entering their gardens for the friendly annual Residents' Garden Competition. These gardens on council estates form a vital patchwork of refuges for wildlife and biodiversity across the city, as well as being a private haven for the residents who tend them. The competition offers prizes worth over £500 to gardeners of all sorts on council estates.

Whether you have a big garden, a vegetable patch or just a few pots, you can sign up to participate - or perhaps win! - in one of the many different categories. With a

range of categories from 'Environmentally Friendly Garden' to 'Community Garden', 'Kitchen Garden' to 'Tubs or Baskets', there really is a spot for everyone.

Rather than the type or size of your gardening efforts, what matters for the competition is that they be in some way nature-friendly. The competition favours gardens that use the methods listed in the article below, which help nature and biodiversity in the city to recover.

To enter the 2023 Residents' Garden Competition, why not try adopting some of the green, money-saving tips from the list in the article below, on how gardeners can help Nature?

The deadline to apply for this year's competition is 30 June 2023. Friendly judges will visit competing gardens on 13 July. And a fun prize-giving event will be held in September.

You can download your entry form at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/tenant-and-leaseholder-garden-competition](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/tenant-and-leaseholder-garden-competition) or by emailing [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phoning 01223-458323.

## **Gardeners help nature by...**

- not using chemical pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers; potentially harming human health, they also harm bees, butterflies, birds, hedgehogs, toads and other wildlife
- using mulch instead to block weeds, protect plants and reduce watering
- mowing a lot less so wildflowers and nettles can come through to feed birds, bees, butterflies and other insects
- growing natural flowers with single blooms: bees and butterflies can't feed from 'double' blooms



- composting garden and kitchen waste as free fertiliser to improve soil, and collecting rainwater, to water for free
- growing their own organic veg to save money and eat healthily
- using barriers like fleece to protect organic plants, rather than chemicals that poison wildlife such as thrushes

## **Leaseholders**

### **Beware domestic CCTV**

The City Council recommends that neither council leaseholders nor tenants have any cameras installed that view outside their home. Data Protection laws mean filming anyone outside your home without their formal permission can result in lawsuits and heavy fines. This happened when a resident who had installed a doorbell camera was ordered in court to pay £100,000 to his neighbour.

(Council tenants, for instance, must submit a Tenant Alteration application before installing any CCTV - or retrospectively if it was done without permission. Otherwise they could be in breach of their Tenancy Agreement.)

If you do choose to have viewing cameras in or outside your home, it is important that you set up your system so that it can't capture any image of people outside the boundary of your own private property. For example, it must not capture images of neighbours' homes or gardens, communal corridors or other communal spaces, landings or pathways, or public footpaths or streets. But this can be very complicated, for instance in flat blocks, where even the space immediately outside your front door may be communal.

If you set up your system so it captures only images within the boundary of your private domestic property (including your garden), then the data protection laws will not apply to you. Otherwise you will have to take complicated procedural steps to stay within the data protection laws. The Information Commissioner's Office gives guidance on them at <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/domestic-cctv-systems>

The guidance contains additional advice on recording and storing images, use of audio recording, sharing of images (rarely a good idea) and consulting with your neighbours about the use of CCTV.

Failure to inform yourself about and comply with the details of the law could lead to fines or being sued by individuals, as mentioned above, for significant sums of money.

For more information, email the City Council at [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457835.

## Home improvement grants



The council-funded Home Improvement Agency (HIA) can give grants of up to £30,000 for works that adapt or improve the home of disabled children or adults, or older people who want to be able to live independently. The HIA is a non-profit organisation funded and supported by the City Council to improve the quality of homes and lives locally.

Note that homeowners can be eligible for these means-tested grants, which are aimed at those on low incomes or benefits. (These grants are not available to council tenants.)

Examples of works that could be covered by a Home Improvement Agency grant could be, for instance, installing a level-access shower, an adapted kitchen or toilet, a stairlift or hoist, or disabled access to your property. The Home Improvement Agency can help with the stages of the process, such as:

- applying for a grant
- getting quotes for the work, and then choosing among the quotes
- doing any applications for planning permission and building control
- checking tenders and appointing a contractor
- seeing the work is done to your satisfaction
- getting payments made

Examples of works that can be covered by the HIA's grants could include, for instance:

- the fitting of new, energy-efficient boilers that help reduce the energy bills of older or disabled residents

- replacing a boiler for a homeowner who can't get their home warm
- paying for replacement doors and windows, roofing repairs, damp proofing or security improvements

For a small fee, the Home Improvement Agency can also support those who are not eligible for the agency's grants, but who struggle to organise this kind of work when it is needed on their home.

For more information visit [www.cambshia.org](http://www.cambshia.org), email [hia@cambshia.org](mailto:hia@cambshia.org) or phone 01954-713330 or 01954- 713347.

## Where to get financial help



### Struggling to afford food?

To see how to get a voucher so you can visit one of Cambridge's Food Banks, visit <https://cambridgocity.foodbank.org.uk> or phone 07772-538628.

### **Can't pay your rent?**

Phone 01223-457000 today to request a payment plan, spreading the cost over months, to avoid losing your home.

### **If you need to claim Universal Credit...**

Apply online at [www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit)

### **If you can't pay your Council Tax...**

See if you are entitled to claim Council Tax Reduction. Apply online at [www.gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction](http://www.gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction)

### **If struggling with mobile phone or internet bills...**

See online at [www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/2020/04/keeping-everyone-connected](http://www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/2020/04/keeping-everyone-connected) to find companies supporting customers who are having difficulty in paying.

### **Can't pay your water bills?**

Cambridge Water may be able to help at tel. 0800-587-7701 or online at [www.cambridge-water.co.uk/household/extra-help/help-with-paying](http://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/household/extra-help/help-with-paying)

Cambridge Citizens' Advice can also help with all the issues just listed. Contact them at tel. 0344-848-7979.

**Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme** can provide help in the form of supermarket vouchers, energy vouchers, used cookers, white goods, furniture and clothes. Freephone 0808-278-7807, Mon-Friday, 9.30am-3.30pm. To be eligible, you must:

- have no savings
- if working, have a total household income of less than about £16,000 per year

- if on benefits, receive Pension Credit, Universal Credit, Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance or Income-related Employment & Support Allowance

To apply, phone Cambridge Citizens' Advice Bureau at 0344-848-7979 or 01223-222660, or email them at [caba@cambridgecab.org.uk](mailto:caba@cambridgecab.org.uk)

### **If you don't have access to the internet...**

Cambridge Online may be able to help for free. Phone them at 01223-300407.

### **£1,500 for local groups**

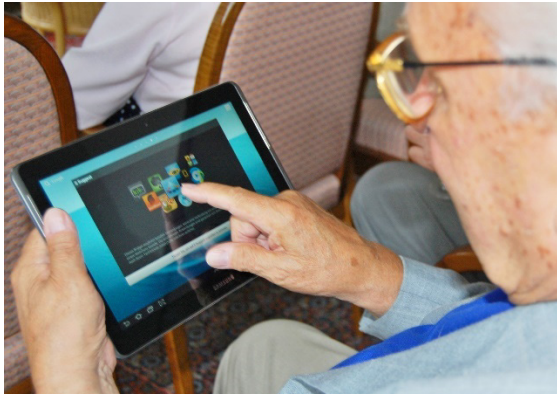
The Cambridge Good Life Fund is giving grants of up to £1,500 to local residents who create or run a group encouraging people to connect up and learn new skills. Examples might be a book club, walking group, craft class, gardening group or any other activity that reduces isolation and supports wellbeing. They hope to approve as many applications for small grants as possible. So do apply if:

- your activity promotes wellbeing
- at least four people are involved
- they are volunteering their time and energy
- your group is open to all, without discrimination

See their information video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3HrFZfT6I0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3HrFZfT6I0)

Apply online at [www.cpslmind.org.uk/how-we-help/good-life-service/good-life-fund](http://www.cpslmind.org.uk/how-we-help/good-life-service/good-life-fund), or email [goodlifefund@cpslmind.org.uk](mailto:goodlifefund@cpslmind.org.uk) or phone 0300-303-4363.

## Who to contact for services



Register for your personal Housing Services account at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts)

### **Cambridge Virtual Community**

For support around effects of Covid-19 visit [www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc](http://www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc)

### **Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline**

Tel: Freephone 0808-2000-247

Visit [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

### **Make council payments by phone**

Tel: 01223-457779, with bank card

### **Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage**

Tel: 01223-457000

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tenants](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tenants)

## **Repairs**

Tel: 01223-457000; or 0300-303-8389 for out of hours emergency repairs

## **Contact Council in Sign Language**

Register at <https://signlive.co.uk>, then dial 01223-457000 for a live interpreter

## **Council Tax**

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457000

## **Housing for Older People and Visiting Support Service**

E: [independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457199

## **Home-Link lettings**

Visit [www.home-link.org.uk](http://www.home-link.org.uk)

Tel: 01223-457918

## **Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours**

Tel: 03300-538-109 (same cost as a normal landline)

## **Housing & Council Tax Benefits**

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457000



### **Bins, recycling, street-cleaning**

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-rubbish](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-rubbish)

Tel: 01223-457000

### **Bulky waste collection**

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/arrange-a-bulky-waste-collection](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/arrange-a-bulky-waste-collection)

Tel: 01223-457000

### **Report tenancy fraud**

E: [fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk)

### **Report anti-social behaviour**

E: [asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457950

### **Noise complaints**

E: [env.health@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457000

### **Council emergencies out of hours**

Tel: 0300-3038389

### **To complain about council services**

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions)

## **Council's contractors on estates**

### **TSG Services**

E: [enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk)

Tel: 01223-828777

For gas or hot water, tel. 0800-111-4044

### **Goshen communal cleaning**

E: [cs@goshenmultiservices.com](mailto:cs@goshenmultiservices.com)

Tel: 0754-2826553

### **Hi-Spec window cleaning**

E: [john.landiers@hispecservices.co.uk](mailto:john.landiers@hispecservices.co.uk)

## **Suicide Awareness**

If you or someone else feels suicidal, dial 111, then option 2, for help from NHS mental health professionals.

And [www.stayingsafe.net](http://www.stayingsafe.net) is a free website offering practical help for people with suicidal thoughts, and for those caring for them.