

Open Door, Spring 2021



For the tenants and leaseholders of Cambridge City Council

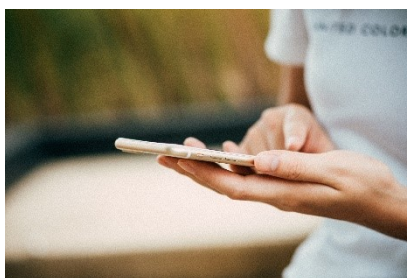
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Editorial

From David Greening, Head of Housing Services



Welcome to this edition of Open Door. The first article shows how to access City Council services. You will see how to use our [My Cambridge portal online](#) to access our digital services. Those without access to the internet can still phone the Council at 01223-457000. This and future editions of Open Door will signpost you towards free help to start using computers and getting online.

We show you some of the [financial help available](#) amidst the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. If struggling to pay your rent, please phone our financial inclusion officers who can provide advice at 01223-457070. This edition tells about the range of free support we can all access to [protect our mental health and prevent isolation](#). We also show where to get [hands-on help in your locality](#) for things like benefits, food and shopping, loneliness or mental health services. You'll see the extensive, immediate

help available for anyone experiencing [domestic abuse](#). And we explain the help that we the City Council can give to tenants and leaseholders who are [hoarding](#).

Despite Covid-19, the Council recently commissioned an [independent satisfaction survey](#) that was sent to all its tenants and leaseholders. This edition gives an overview of your feedback. Your elected resident representatives will now help drive the priority actions the Council will take to improve on areas of low satisfaction. Coming editions of Open Door will show you these actions. This edition also explains how the [Housing Ombudsman](#) could help, if ever the Council's services and complaints procedure failed to satisfy you.

As we look forward to the year ahead, one of our articles invites you to enter this year's [Residents' Garden Competition](#), with its theme of protecting the environment. That page also shows how [wildlife is reviving](#) in ponds on council land, due to our eco-friendly policies. And meanwhile if, after the disruptions of the past year, you are interested in a radical change, we have an article about Homefinder, the City Council-approved service that offers [social housing tenancies around the country](#).

Robert Pollock was recently appointed as the new Chief Executive of Cambridge City Council. Robert brings a broad range of experience working in leadership roles across Local Government, the Civil Service and organisations that tackle inequality. You will hear from him in person in the next edition of Open Door.

At www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus, there is always general guidance for residents on Covid-19, a list of the neighbourhood groups who can assist you, and NHS and government advice around the virus. For email notification of any changes, enter your email address at www.cambridge.gov.uk/subscribe-for-email-alerts

Information in this edition was, as usual, correct at time of writing but with Covid-19, situations can change quickly. For the most up to date information on council services, always check our website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-changes-to-our-services

With best wishes, David Greening

Access your council services online

Why not use the My Cambridge portal online? It's easy to register, at the top right-hand corner of the Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk

You can also use it to access your own housing account as a tenant or leaseholder. See the next article below for details.

And why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper? It's easy to read on any device with wifi, saving 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. To ask for another copy for a joint tenant, email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

A panel of council tenants and leaseholders help select and edit the content of every Open Door edition. To get involved, email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Email your photos of City Homes estates or green spaces to opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Your City Council services

Changes to council services

In coming years, all the digital services provided by the City Council will be available in one place, through the My Cambridge portal on the Council's website. It's easy to access it and register, in the top right-hand corner of the homepage at www.cambridge.gov.uk

The My Cambridge portal gives you a single system to request services and see the progress of your enquiries, using your smartphone or other online device. It also gives you access to your own personal housing account, on the Tenant and Leaseholder Portal.

Currently My Cambridge lets you manage your Council Tax account, claim benefits, notify about a change of circumstances, report a missed bin or report issues in streets or parks. By summer 2021, it will let you carry out even more tasks quickly and conveniently, including:

- making appointments for repairs to your council home
- reporting noise complaints or antisocial behaviour

Council cash offices closed

Alongside these improvements, the Council is reviewing its customer service arrangements, to support people to get the most out of these online services as they are introduced, and prioritise staff time to help customers who need it most.

This means customers will be assisted to access services themselves online, through advice, personalised guidance, and use of council equipment. Anyone who needs support from the City Council to access services will continue receiving this over the phone or through pre-booked face-to-face appointments.

Introducing this appointment-only service for face-to-face meetings means the Council's two cash payment offices at Mandela House and 171 Arbury Road will remain permanently closed.

Cash payments will still be able to be made through Post Offices or PayPoint outlets. And the Council will fully support customers to make payments in ways suitable for

them, as it has been doing during Covid-19 lockdowns. So those unable to access the internet can still phone the Council at 01223-457000.

If you do need to contact staff, please first check whether the service or information you need is available online. But if you have an essential need to meet staff in person, phone 01223-457000.

Open Door will keep you informed about changes in council services. If you'd like to get involved, please email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458323.

Cleaning contractors

In previous editions of Open Door, we have provided updates on the re-procurement of the cleaning contract. Unfortunately, the company who was recently awarded the contract for a start date of 1st April 2021 have now retracted their offer and withdrawn from the process.

To ensure that residential blocks continue to receive a cleaning service from 1st April 2021, the Council has decided to extend the existing contract with the current provider, Churchill, for a further 12 months until 31st March 2022.

This will allow adequate time to hold a new procurement process whilst ensuring that your cleaning service is not disrupted.

Please note that if you have a caretaker, your cleaning service will remain unchanged. And there will be a change to the window cleaning service, with the newly appointed Hi-Spec Facilities Services delivering that service from 1st April 2021.

Hardship funds and financial help amidst Covid

If you are in trouble financially due to being diagnosed with Covid-19 or being told to self-isolate because you might be infected, you may be eligible for a one-off financial payment of £500. You would need to show a positive Covid-19 test or evidence that you have been told to self-isolate by the Test & Trace system. You can check if you are eligible and apply for this payment at www.cambridge.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment

The Council can offer help for a range of other things, for example arranging for food to be delivered to you if you have to stay at home. For further information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-ask-for-help

If you are working or self-employed and also receive housing benefit or Council Tax reduction, make sure to update your benefits account online if there is a change in your circumstances, e.g. if you are furloughed or on reduced hours. You can do this at www.cambridge.gov.uk/update-your-benefits-account-when-your-address-or-circumstances-change Your benefits will be adjusted to reflect any reduction or loss of your income. If you receive Tax Credits, you must also let HMRC know about any change in your circumstances.

Meanwhile if, as a city council tenant, you can't pay your rent, please phone the Council's housing service as soon as possible at 01223-457070 and explain your situation. They can work out a manageable payment plan with you, so that you don't lose your home. But they can only help in this way if you get in touch.

If you can't pay your Council Tax, you may be entitled to Council Tax Reduction. If you are not receiving Universal Credit, you can make a claim for Council Tax Reduction at www.cambridge.gov.uk/make-a-benefit-claim If you are receiving Universal Credit, you will have been assessed for Council Tax Reduction. If you don't have access to the internet, Cambridge Citizen's Advice can advise you over the phone at 0344-848-7979.



Applying to stay in the UK - deadline June 2021!

If you are an EU national who wants to remain in Britain, you must have applied to the UK's European Resettlement Scheme by 30th June 2021. (In most cases, you must have started living in the UK by 31 December 2020.) See the government's advice at www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families Advice is also available at www.cambridge.gov.uk/understanding-the-brex-it-process-advice-from-the-government

Or for help with submitting your application, phone 0333-344-5675.

Help with your finances during Covid-19

Help with your bills and benefits

A wide range of financial support is available during the Covid-19 crisis.

To start checking whether you are eligible for any government grants, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-financial-support-for-residents

If you find you are struggling with energy bills, the Warm Homes project provides households with the information and resources they need to stay warm and healthy, whilst cutting costs and carbon. This free service can help you to access grants, find additional support and provide small home improvements. Cambridge City Council has partnered with the environmental charity PECT to deliver this service. Phone their freephone service at 0800-8021773 or 01733-568408 (extension 313), or email warmhomes@pect.org.uk

Connecting Cambridgeshire list mobile phone and internet providers who help customers in financial difficulty to stay connected. Visit www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/2020/04/keeping-everyone-connected

Or if you are struggling to pay your water bill, Cambridge Water can help at www.cambridge-water.co.uk/news/help-to-pay-water-bills

For an overview of the benefits available, visit www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support Use the City Council's online Benefits Calculator to see how much you might be entitled to, at <https://cambridge.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

For free, one to one help with budgeting or claiming benefits, email the Council's financial inclusion officers at incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk or phone them at 01223-457000. They may also be able to help you to access hardship funds.

Cambridge Citizens' Advice can also help with all the above and more, at Freephone 08082-787808. They can also help if you are having difficulty claiming benefits, or you can't use the internet.

End to benefits via Post Office

If you currently have your benefits paid into a Post Office account, a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will notify you that that option will end in November 2021.

You should start arranging now for your benefits to instead be paid into a bank or credit union account. To continue receiving benefit payments from November 2021 onwards, you will have to have given details of this other account to the DWP.

Try local credit union Eastern Savings & Loans (tel. 03336-000690, email office@eslcu.co.uk, visit www.eslcu.co.uk). Or if having difficulty opening a standard bank account, the government-approved Money Advice Service lists banks offering

more basic accounts at www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/basic-bank-accounts Citizens' Advice can also advise at Freephone 08082-787808 or online at www.cambridgecab.org.uk



Free employment skills and trainings

Cambridgeshire Skills is a community learning service that offers many free online courses, so adults can train and study at home at their own pace. All courses, both online and face to face, come with full support from a tutor.

You can also access their Live-Streamed Online Learning, giving you live, direct contact with a tutor. When restrictions allow, face to face courses in a classroom setting are also available, with suitable Covid-19 protections in place.

There is a wide range of subjects including computer skills, English as a Second Language, employability skills and much more. 91% of learners succeed at these courses - one of the highest achievement rates in the country.

Many of their courses are free if you are:

- aged 19 or over
- have lived in the European Economic Area for at least 3 years

- are unemployed, low-waged (earning less than £18,000 per year) or receive certain benefits

For details, phone their friendly admissions team at 01353-613013.

Clarion Jobs and Training also offer a wide range of free and practical courses that you can study online, to improve your skills and employability.

You can phone their friendly Guideline service at 0300-100-0303 or email guideline@myclarionhousing.com

Examples of their trainings are:

- Food Hygiene Level 2
- Positive Me Confidence-Building
- Health & Safety qualifications
- Helping in schools
- Working in security

Once you have enrolled with Clarion, all their courses are free. For information or to get started, email Dee Owusu-Ansah at Dee.Owusuansah@clarionhg.com or phone 07710-115220.

Meanwhile, the organisation Women into Construction are providing support, training and work experience for women looking to work in construction.

To apply, email Shelley.Lawrence@women-into-construction.org, phone 07380-808-036 or visit www.women-into-construction.org

Tablet Loan Scheme

The City Council is facilitating free digital access to eligible tenants and leaseholders, through a tablet loan scheme. The tablets are pre-loaded with 20GB of data and are loaned for 3 months initially.

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

To be eligible, the resident must have no access to digital equipment or Wi-Fi at home (other than smart phones), and must be receiving Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. To apply, contact resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458323.

Make your money go further

The Making Money Count service at <http://makingmoneycount.org.uk> gives free, independent help for managing your money day to day. This includes finding the best deals on free, low-cost or recycled items, and saving on energy and utility bills. It also shows you how to:

- make sure you are bringing in the maximum possible income
- budget, seeing where your money goes and setting some aside for future needs
- find the right bank account for your payments in and out
- borrow at the fairest rates

Some bills and debts are more important than others. The Making Money Count site explains which ones you should pay first, then gives free, professional help to sort out debt worries quickly.

Living with money worries can affect our mental health: the site shows where to get free help if anxiety or mental health problems are affecting your experience with money. And see the article further below in this Open Door for lots more free support for your mental health.

Meanwhile, Cambridge Re-Use is an excellent local shop offering those on low incomes a wide range of quality second-hand furniture and electrical goods at prices they can afford.

You take along evidence of your benefits or low income, to avail of their lowest prices, which are about 50% lower than at charity shops. The staff are extraordinarily helpful. Their mission is to enable the most vulnerable people and families to maintain a comfortable home.

They have now started selling to the general public too. Prices for customers on low incomes will remain the same, while the general public will pay higher prices that are still very good value.

To browse their quality items, visit their website at www.cambridgereuse.org.uk Their shop is at Unit H, The Paddocks, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, CB1 8DH, Tues-Sat, 10am-3pm, tel. 01223-576535. Though closed under Covid-19 restrictions when Open Door went to print, the shop will be keen to welcome you in person as soon as restrictions lift.

Stopping loan sharks

Loan sharks are illegal lenders who target low-income and desperate households. They might seem friendly at first, but never borrow from them - better options are always available, once you know where to look. Risks around loan sharks include:

- far higher interest rates (one woman borrowed £500 and ended up being expected to repay £88,000)
- threats, harassment or attacks if you get behind with your repayments
- pressure to borrow more to repay an earlier loan, in a spiral of debt that you can never repay

A loan shark may well:

- offer little paperwork or information, eg. on interest rates or how much you owe
- take passports, bank cards or driving licences as 'security'
- increase the debt, add charges or refuse to allow you to settle your debt

Over 400 loan sharks have recently been prosecuted, with 586 years of jail terms in all. £83 million worth of their illegal loans have been written off, helping over 30,000 victims who had borrowed from them.

The Financial Conduct Authority lists all authorised lenders online at <https://register.fca.org.uk/s> Check whether your proposed lender is listed there: if they're not, never borrow from them.

Instead, get support from the free Stop Loan Sharks app, or phone their 24-hour helpline at 0300-555-2222. Or you can report a loan shark online at www.stoploansharks.co.uk Their smartphone app Stop Loan Sharks makes it easy to report loan sharks and get support. (The app is free to download on iOS and

Android devices, the App Store and Google Play Store.) For more information and help, visit www.stoploansharks.co.uk Their Live Chat support is available on there from 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

Another great source of immediate, free, independent support is the Money Advice Service. For free, impartial advice and support from them about your money, phone 0800-138-7777 or Typetalk 18001-0800-915- 4622, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Local support in your neighbourhood



Protecting our mental health

Eating well, exercising, getting outdoors, relaxing with loved ones... We all know that these basic lifestyle habits support and enhance our mental health. Research shows that the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing make you even stronger. (To help remember them, their first letters together spell CLANG.)

C. Connect with others, making time for friends, neighbours and family.

L. Learn - Learn something new, like a new recipe, skill or game.

A. Active - Ensure you get physically active every day, at something you enjoy.

N. Notice – Pause to pay attention to moments using your senses: what pleasant things can you, for a moment, see, hear, touch, smell and taste...?

G. Give - Do something nice for someone. Smile, say thanks, leave a little gift or do some volunteering.

The Sleep Foundation offers useful guidelines to protect the quality of your sleep during the virus crisis, at www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-guidelines-covid-19-isolation And the NHS, with videos by doctors to improve your mental health and wellbeing, provides resources at www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression

Addictions (to things like food, alcohol, drugs, shopping, gambling or internet use) can intensify when we are under pressure. The NHS offers free help at www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/addiction-what-is-it

MIND gives free support and advice on an A-Z range of mental health problems, at www.mind.org.uk/information-support/a-z-mental-health And at Lifeline, mental health professionals give free support over the phone to those isolated, anxious or suffering from mental health problems (Mon-Fri, 11am–11pm, weekends 2-11pm at Freephone 0808-808-2121). They refer you for further help if needed.

For local mental health services, visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk or phone 0345-045-5219, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. But if you, or someone you know, is feeling suicidal, free, immediate help is always available 24/7. Dial 111, then Option 2, for immediate help from an NHS mental health professional over the phone. Or dial the Samaritans at 08457-909090, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. But in an emergency, dial 999.

Coming together

'Check-in & Chat'

People who have to self-isolate due to the virus threat can ask for support from NHS Volunteer Responders. They will make a free, regular 'Check-in & Chat' phone call to you, to prevent you from feeling lonely. You can request this by phoning 0808-196-3646, 8am to 8pm.

The #HaveAChat campaign reminds us all to just take the time to reach out to others around us. Anyone can be lonely: it's now more important than ever to check-in with those around you. Small moments of connection can make a big difference to lonely people.

Meanwhile, Wonderfully Made is a free space in Arbury where those struggling with mental health can come together and relax over fun, easy handcrafts. While observing Covid-19 guidelines, there's free tea and coffee, and easy handcrafts to have fun with on Thursdays, 1-3pm, at Arbury Road Baptist Church. Phone 01223-560590 or visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/arburyroadbaptist

Volunteer for Cambridge Awards

The Mayor of Cambridge's Volunteer for Cambridge Awards recognise outstanding contributions made by volunteers and community groups supporting residents during the Covid-19 crisis. Volunteers give their time delivering medication and meals to vulnerable people, as well as contributing in so many other ways.

Residents are being asked to nominate their own community heroes for an award - as an individual volunteer, community organisation, or an under-18 volunteer. Fill in a quick, easy form at www.cambridge.gov.uk/volunteer-for-cambridge-awards or phone 01223-457878 for a paper form.

Become a Covid-19 Volunteer

To become a local volunteer, check www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-ask-for-help for the contact details of your nearest group, or request them by phone at 01223-457000. You can give as much or as little of your time as you wish, doing things like safely delivering food parcels to neighbours, but doing nothing that would endanger your health.

Hands-on help for those self-isolating

If you are struggling as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, support is available. If self-isolating or shielded, local organisations and aid groups across the city can help you. Local volunteers are helping with day to day tasks like shopping, getting medicines, dog walking, or making friendly phone calls to prevent you feeling isolated.

There is a local group near you, so look out for flyers and posters locally. Or fill in the Ask for Help form at www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-ask-for-help If you can't access the internet, phone the Council for help at 01223-457000.

If you are asked to self-isolate because you or someone you live with tested positive, or you have been traced as a 'close contact', you must complete your isolation period at home, not leaving it for any reason. If possible, ask a family member or friend to shop for you. Or order your groceries online or over the phone: many local shops now offer delivery. Find top tips on the Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/buying-food-when-self-isolating-or-shielding

Food banks and emergency food hubs are also available across the city, if you are in a financial crisis and can't afford food for yourself or your family. If you don't know where your local group is, you can be put in touch with them by using the Ask for Help form at www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-ask-for-help or phoning the Council at 01223-457000.

We all must wear a face mask

Current government advice is that we must all, by law, wear a face mask before entering any:

- NHS settings or care homes
- shops, shopping centres, buildings providing any services, or places of worship
- transport hubs, public transport or taxis

- indoor places with people not from your own home or bubble, where you can't stay socially distanced from them

Unfortunately, some Cambridge residents have not been complying, putting their community at risk. They can be fined £200 for a first offence, with fines doubling at each offence up to a maximum of £6,400.

Help for kids in the city's north

The Red Hen Project is a small charity working with primary school children and their families in the north of Cambridge. They help children and families to remove any barriers to education that they're experiencing. They are active at Arbury, The Grove, King's Hedges, Orchard Park, and Shirley primary schools, where up to one third of pupils live in poverty.

Red Hen staff work in partnership with families in their homes to address many issues. These may include bullying, behaviour problems, debt, housing, domestic violence, low self esteem, family break-ups, illness or the death of a parent. Red Hen staff liaise with other support agencies and organisations, such as food banks, to make sure that families receive all the help that is available to them. To contact them for help for your family, visit www.redhenproject.org, email getsupport@redhenproject.org or phone 07966-839635.

Online resources for local families

Cambridge Virtual Community Centre is a fabulous network of free groups and activities to join in with online. On their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc, every day brings a new resource, activity or connect-up. They range from gentle movement for the elderly to online activities that can form part of kids' home schooling.

One of the many groups you'll see on there is ChYpPS, the City Council's outreach service for children and young people. Would your kids like something to do during term time? ChYpPS run a Fun and Games session for 8-11 year olds on Mondays 4-5pm, and a Drawing Session for those aged 7 and over on Tuesdays, 4-5pm. Places are limited so book to avoid disappointment. To book, email chypps@cambridge.gov.uk or private message ChYpPS through their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/chypps

They also run Lunch Break with ChYpPS on Facebook Live. No need to book for this - just come along online and see their smiling faces, for some fun lunchtime activities on Mondays and Wednesdays, 12.30pm. Don't forget to 'Like' ChYpPS' Facebook page so that you can see their events and offers as they come up.

Another resource group at the online Cambridge Virtual Community Centre is Family Makers. They run daytime Get Togethers so kids can enjoy some fun making and crafting with them, as part of their home schooling activities. The gatherings are hosted by Makespace and open to anyone via Zoom on Tuesdays, 11am. Visit <https://bit.ly/3cttq6x> for more information. You can see videos of the fun activities they've shared so far - past weeks' activities have included creating optical illusions, 'vortex cannons' and musical machines!

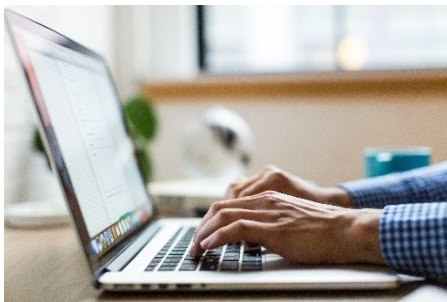
North Cambridge Community Partnership are a range of groups supporting families in Arbury and King's Hedges. Visit them at www.facebook.com/northcamb They include the Kings Hedges Family Support Project. For help from them, visit <https://khfsp.org.uk> or phone 01223-778600.

Free money course for women

Cambridge Women's Resources Centre has for years been providing the resources, opportunities and space for women to change their lives for the better. They remain active online now, offering support and resources for women in Cambridge over the internet until they can see you again in person.

For instance, they run an online course to help with your financial planning and money management. These courses are open to all women free of charge, though priority is given to women who are unemployed or working less than 24 hours per week. For more information or to sign up, email info@cwrc.org.uk or phone 01223-321148.

Meanwhile, to see the services they offer and plan your visit to their friendly coffee room when restrictions allow, visit their welcoming website at www.cwrc.org.uk



Your satisfaction survey results

Many councils have avoided doing satisfaction surveys during the virus crisis. But Cambridge City Council felt it was more important than ever to reach out and listen to its tenants and leaseholders. An independent company was recently commissioned to send a satisfaction survey to all the Council's tenants and leaseholders - over 8,000 households. The results below show your satisfaction levels with aspects of your housing service.

All 6,919 tenants and 1,191 leaseholders were invited to take part. 2,089 residents completed the survey, either online or by post. The response rate was 26%. These are the highlight results:

Satisfied with landlord's service overall

General tenants, 72%

Sheltered tenants, 79%

Leaseholders, 54%

Feel the Council keeps residents informed

General tenants, 66%

Sheltered tenants, 81%

Leaseholders, 55%

Satisfied with overall quality of their home

General tenants, 74%

Sheltered tenants, 89%

Leaseholders, 73%

Feel the Council provides a home that is safe and secure

General tenants, 78%

Sheltered tenants, 93%

Leaseholders, 67%

Feel their home is easy and affordable to keep warm

General tenants, 68%

Sheltered tenants, 84%

Leaseholders, 73%

Satisfied with any repairs they received in the past 18 months

General tenants, 76%

Sheltered tenants, 92%

Feel the City Council is easy to deal with

General tenants, 73%

Sheltered tenants, 82%

Leaseholders, 55%

Satisfied with advice and support for paying, and for managing their finances

General tenants, 71%

Sheltered tenants, 80%

Leaseholders, 48%

Satisfied with overall estate services

General tenants, 53%

Sheltered tenants, 63%

Leaseholders, 36%

By national standards, your response rate was considered high, as over 2,000 households filled in and returned the survey. That constitutes almost 1 in 4 of all the Council's tenants and leaseholders so it is considered quite representative.

It was also excellent news that over 600 of you volunteered to be more actively involved in the housing services you receive, giving the Council your ongoing feedback and input in order to help drive service improvements for the benefit of all the Council's tenants and leaseholders.

Over the months ahead, each edition of Open Door will bring you updates on the actions that the Council has committed to do to improve satisfaction levels in the service areas that you said matter to you most.

Your elected tenant and leaseholder representatives will help to oversee this process. They will help hold the Council to account to meet those commitments and make those visible improvements. You can still at any time join the other 600 residents who have just signed up to give ongoing feedback to their housing service. Just email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458323.

And if you are interested, you can read the full, detailed results of this satisfaction survey on the City Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement-strategies-updates-and-reports

Your home and your services

Free Homefinder service

Looking for a quick move into affordable housing away from Cambridge? The City Council can help you through an approved scheme called Homefinder. It's a non-profit scheme that's helping social housing tenants increase their mobility around the country.

As well as ordinary tenancies, Homefinder offers mutual exchanges, accessible homes, retirement housing and sheltered housing. They can also help people in temporary accommodation, or who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

So if you're looking for a complete change of scene, why not browse what's currently available on the Homefinder website? To find your own ideal home around the country, register today at <https://homefinderuk.org>

Even before you register, you can browse the hundreds of attractive properties available at <https://homefinderuk.org/my-cbl/property-search>. They include apartments and houses, from the smallest to the largest. The scheme is perfect if you or your household want to move, but don't want to stay in Cambridge.

At the time of going to print, Homefinder were advertising about 120 properties all over the country - from Cornwall, Cheshire and Swindon to across the north of England. At the moment, they include a lot of properties for the over-55s. And they also offer disability-adapted properties.

But if you register and highlight the type of home you're looking for, they can also link you to properties that are not displayed on their website, helping you to apply for a property that matches your personal circumstances and budget. If all goes well, a move can often be arranged within weeks.

For more information, see the City Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/find-social-housing-outside-cambridge Then, if you want to apply for a move or you have further questions, email council officer Brian Gallagher at Brian.Gallagher@cambridge.gov.uk or phone him at 0759-0219939.



Help for those who hoard

The Council is a signatory of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Multi-Agency Protocol for Working with People with Hoarding Behaviours (2016), and is committed to upholding its approaches.

In 2020 the Council published its policy on hoarding, and its procedure for working with tenants who exhibit hoarding behaviours.

Hoarding is a complex condition which cannot be resolved quickly. As a landlord, the Council does not expect to be able to resolve the hoarding behaviour, but rather to signpost the individual to the appropriate support services.

To help with this approach, the Council has introduced a rigorous, evidence-based risk assessment that will identify how each case should be managed. Where cases are assessed as high-risk and where there are safeguarding concerns, the Council will refer the case to appropriate external partners. In cases assessed as low- or medium-risk, the Council can make a referral to its own Tenancy Sustainment Service (TSS). The TSS will work with the tenant to agree actions needed to mitigate risks and improve the hoarding behaviour. This approach will include:

- providing a personalised plan so the person's rights, choices and autonomy are respected
- identifying multi-agency solutions and maximising the use of existing services and resources
- a focus on prevention and modification of hoarding behaviours, aiming to reduce the need for formal or compulsory solutions

For low- and medium-risk cases, the TSS will maintain regular contact with the tenant over a 6-month period to help ensure that the agreed actions in the personalised plan are completed. Alongside this approach, tenants will also be encouraged to contact the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue's Safe and Well Service for guidance on improving the fire safety of their home.

If you have any concerns about hoarding in your neighbourhood or you would like to discuss your own situation, please phone the City Council's Tenancy Management Team at 01223-457070 or email housingofficer@cambridge.gov.uk

Getting and staying physically active

To help you get more active this Spring, the Council's Active Lifestyles Team are providing a free Return to Fitness programme online with 8 video workouts and lifestyle tips. Start any time, using it when and where it suits you. Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-fitness-activities Or follow them at Let's Get Moving Cambridge on Facebook or Twitter.

Walk Before You Run is their free 4-week online course to improve your walking fitness before going on to a beginners' running programme. It provides weekly walking sessions and strength workouts.

Their online Weight Management Circuit Class helps you lose weight and stay trim, with circuit- and dance-based exercises adapted to your needs. On Zoom on Tuesdays 6–7pm, it's £3 per session but the first six are free. Email sport@cambridge.gov.uk

Workouts for Families

At www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-fitness-activities, you can link through to:

- Mobile Adventures Activity Trails
- PE with Joe Wicks, for 20 minutes three times per week
- Activity Master Challenge
- Stay Active for children's health and wellbeing, plus PE lessons
- free Youth Sport Trust resources for primary and secondary PE at home
- England Athletics Fun activities for parents and children, based on fundamental movement skills including running, jumping and throwing

Workouts for disabilities and long-term conditions

At www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-fitness-activities, you can link through to Let's Get Moving Cambridge videos for exercising at home. They are ideal for people with health conditions, long-term illness and older people.

Meanwhile, Cambridge United Community Trust deliver both face to face and online weekly Zoom sessions for people with disabilities.

And Able2b@home offer weekly online sessions adapted for all abilities. They include 30-minute boxercise, conditioning and relaxation classes.

NHS fitness programme

We all need exercise to stay as fit and well as possible. Even a little helps prevent or reduce our risk of:

- type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and heart attacks
- joint or muscle problems
- mental health problems
- admission to hospital
- obesity, difficulty staying mobile and loss of independence

Exercise also makes you feel happy and healthy, it's free and it can be fun! For all these reasons, why not get started this Spring with the free 12-Week Fitness Plan proposed by the NHS at www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/12-week-fitness-plan

Visit the NHS site www.howfittoday.co.uk/exercises to see videos for each exercise. After mastering the easiest ones, you can keep gradually building up your health and fitness for free.

Help for using computers and the internet

Cambridge Online is a charity that helps everyone learn to use the internet, so that no-one is left behind. Despite Covid-19 restrictions, their friendly Digital Champions are still available to you over the phone and by email.

Maybe you're a complete beginner with computers? Or perhaps you need to use the internet to look for work or benefits, find health information, or just get in touch with family and friends. They can help you over the phone with all those things. Just phone 01223-300407: you may need to leave a message, but they will call you back.

They can also get you started with a suitable online learning course, until they can teach you face to face when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. For more information, visit <http://cambridgeonline.org.uk/courses>

In normal times, there is a range of other free courses and face to face help around the city for learning to use computers and the internet from scratch. Although Covid-19 restrictions mean they are not active at the moment, they will begin again when restrictions are lifted.

The City Council will also be providing coaching and support for everyone needing to learn about computers in order to access public services online. Future editions of Open Door will keep you informed about how to join in and get any help you need.

Kids Get Help with Technology

Meanwhile, for those who are already able to access the internet, there are many other free courses online too, to help you improve your skills at using computers and the internet. The Department for Education is running a Get Help with Technology programme whereby technology firms provide vulnerable pupils with free data allowance, internet access and even free laptops. This is to ensure they can fully access online education during lockdown. Speak to your child's school about applying for some of these resources for your child.

Free computer use at local libraries

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, local libraries are doing their best to continue giving residents free access to their public computers and free internet. Note that you can only use those computers to access things like benefits and public services - they're not available for private internet surfing.

At the time when Open Door went to print, you could use their public access computers by first registering as a library user, then pre-booking a computer slot online or over the phone at 0345-045-5225.

At www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/libraries/visit-a-library you can see the opening times for your nearest public library. They are at Arbury Court, Barnwell Road, the Grand Arcade in the city centre, Cherry Hinton, Clay Farm, Milton Road, Ramsey and Rock Road.

Leaseholders



Responsibilities in leasehold gardens

Your lease describes the property that you own as a City Council leaseholder. The plan attached to it shows the areas that are included in your home. Your rights as a leaseholder are governed by a range of laws, in particular the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act of 2002.

Many leasehold properties have been sold a garden area as part of their lease. This area will be coloured pink on the lease plan. Some of these properties also contain a 'Right of Way' (usually coloured pink and hatched red on the lease plan).

This Right of Way gives pedestrian access rights across your leasehold land for the resident of an adjacent property. You must keep the Right of Way in good repair at your own expense, and keep it free from any obstruction. You could be liable if someone tripped or fell and injured themselves there.

As a leaseholder you are also responsible for any plants or trees in any garden area that has been sold to you as part of the lease. You should ensure that these trees and plants are maintained appropriately. Again, you could be held liable if a tree or branch fell and caused damage to property or caused injury.

Similarly, you must not allow ivy to grow onto any leasehold buildings. If ivy has been allowed to grow onto any buildings including shed blocks, you must remove it entirely and kill it at the roots.

Leaseholders are responsible for looking after their own home, and for paying their service charge. But note that they are also responsible for the behaviour of all their household, visitors and any subtenants that they may have.

It is important to fully inform any subtenants in writing from the outset about their responsibilities in relation to neighbours, communal areas and gardens while renting your leasehold property. For reference, you should always consult your lease as this is a contract between you and the Council, and is legally binding.

Communal areas

The City Council manages the communal areas at all of its residential blocks. These communal areas must be kept clear and free from obstruction at all times, to ensure

fire risks are minimised and residents are kept safe. This 'no-obstruction' policy extends across all communal gardens too.

Fire doors and bin-store doors must be kept closed. And in particular, communal areas must never be used for any kind of storage. For instance, bicycles must be stored in designated racks, or in your shed if you have one, or inside your own home. The Council has the legal right to remove any items that have been left in communal areas, and to charge the owner for the cost of doing so.

For any queries that you may have about your leasehold property, please contact the City Council's Home Ownership Team by email at leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk or by phone at 01223-457835. An extensive range of information is also available online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders

Grants and assistance for leaseholders

Grants for fire doors

Camb's Home Improvement Agency is a council service that helps and funds eligible older and vulnerable people to adapt or repair their home. Their mission is to improve lives by improving homes. This includes, for instance, providing funds for removing certain home hazards and improving home security and energy efficiency.

At the moment, the City Council is replacing fire doors for its tenants, and offering its leaseholders the opportunity to pay for having these fire doors installed in their homes by the same contractor. For eligible council leaseholders, the Home Improvement Agency can apply for a grant to get this work funded for them. Leaseholders on a low income or receiving the following benefits may be eligible for this funding and assistance:

- Universal Credit, Income Support, Income-Based Job Seekers' Allowance
- Working Tax Credit with low income

- Housing Benefit, Guaranteed Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit with low income
- Council Tax Support

If you think you might be eligible, please phone Cambs HIA at 01954-713330 or email hia@cambshia.org for further advice about getting a new fire door installed in your home.

And if you are an older or disabled leaseholder, there are also other grants available to adapt your home. These grants are usually means tested using different criteria to those listed earlier for fire doors. So even leaseholders with significant savings are often entitled to these financial aids for improving their homes.

For more information on what they might be able to do for your leasehold home, phone Cambs Home Improvement Agency at 01954-713347 or 01954-713330 or email hia@cambshia.org

Help for leaseholders who hoard

In 2020 the Council published its policy on hoarding, and its procedure for working with council leaseholders who exhibit hoarding behaviours. Because hoarding is a complex condition that cannot be resolved quickly, the Council as a landlord does not expect to be able to resolve the hoarding behaviour. Rather, it will signpost the individual to the appropriate support services.

For cases assessed as high-risk with safeguarding concerns, the Council refers them to appropriate external partners. In cases assessed as low-risk, the leaseholder is encouraged to contact Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue's Safe and Well service for guidance on improving fire safety in their home. The Council will also signpost them to support services and charities such as Hoarding UK.

If you have any concerns about hoarding, please phone the Council's Home Ownership Team at 01223-457835.



Resident involvement

Resident involvement update

Your elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives are in a unique position to challenge, input and vote on decisions at the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee. They champion your interests and will continue using Open Door to keep you updated on their activities. For instance, at the January 2021 sitting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, they influenced the following decisions:

- agreeing budgets for the housing service
- scrutinising the structural repairs and associated works done on council-owned blocks of flats
- scrutinising the review of the Estates and Facilities service
- reviewing the Council's self-assessment report that is required by the Housing Ombudsman (see the article below)

Your elected Resident Representatives also proposed an amendment to the budget of the housing service. This secured funding for a new post which will be responsible for delivering the objectives of the Council's Zero Tolerance Policy.

The idea for this new post came from your volunteer Resident Inspectors, who have seen a rise in illegal fly-tipping and dumping of items in the communal areas of resident blocks across the whole city.

The Council's Zero Tolerance Policy prohibits any items being left or stored in communal areas, because they can cause fires if flammable, and cause an obstruction in the event of fire, both for residents fleeing to safety and for the fire service trying to tackle a blaze. The new officer will engage with City Council tenants and leaseholders, to help educate them about these fire safety risks. They will also help to raise awareness of how to dispose of unwanted items safely and legally. And they will aid enforcement teams in situations where residents illegally fly-tip.

To contact your elected Resident Representatives, email hsc.residents@gmail.com or leave them a phone message at 01223-458323.

The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent dispute resolution service available to tenants and leaseholders. It is responsible for examining your complaints about your landlord, if your landlord's complaints system hasn't responded satisfactorily.

For instance, Cambridge tenants and leaseholders can escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, if they feel that the complaint was not resolved within Cambridge City Council's own internal two-stage process.

A Social Housing White Paper was recently released by government. A key priority of it is to streamline your access to this Housing Ombudsman service, and to raise its profile so that residents are aware of this facility. Crucially, the White Paper aims

to make sure that residents can raise any concerns they have without fear, and can receive a swift and effective resolution.

All registered social housing providers were required by the Housing Ombudsman to do a review of their own Complaints Handling Code, and to publish the results of this self-assessment by 31st December 2020. The government provided a Self-Assessment Tool as a framework by which the City Council could effectively assess its own complaint handling processes, and identify any areas that need improvement.

Cambridge City Council's self-assessment can be found online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/9062/housing-ombudsman-complaint-handling-code-self-assessment.pdf All the resulting actions and recommendations are due to be implemented by Cambridge City Council in 2021.

To find out more about the Housing Ombudsman service, visit www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or phone 0300-111-3000. To make a complaint to or about Cambridge City Council, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions

The Council's complaints policy and procedures are also on that webpage, along with annual reports overviewing each year's complaints to the Council.

Help for communities

Don't suffer in silence

Anyone, at any age, can suffer domestic abuse or sexual violence. City Council housing staff are trained in this area, and committed to tackling domestic abuse in any part of the community. Approach your housing officer about it in confidence by

phoning 01223-457070. Lots of other help is also available, as listed here, and in the second article further below. You can phone:

- Cambridge Women's Aid, 01223-361214
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline, 0808- 2000-247
- Men's Advice Line, 0808-801-0327
- LGBT Helpline, 0800-999-5428
- Cambridge Rape Crisis, 01223-245888

Or for more information visit www.cambsdasv.org.uk

Help for older people

Hourglass supports older people who are experiencing abuse. Visit <https://wearehourglass.org> or www.cambsdasv.org.uk/website/older_people/295055, or email Amanda.Warburton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Help for young people

Visit www.cambsdasv.org.uk/website/for_young_people/84012

Or the national helpline Childline is at Freephone 0800-1111 and online at www.childline.org.uk

Keep Your Head is an excellent website of resources for young people in Cambridge, supporting their safety, wellbeing and mental health at www.keep-your-head.com

And the organisation Women's Aid have created The Hideout, a space to help children and young people understand domestic abuse and take positive action against it. Visit <http://thehideout.org.uk>

Help for friends and families

Opening Closed Doors is an information leaflet for anyone concerned about someone else undergoing abuse. Read or download it at www.cambsdasv.org.uk/website/for_friends_and_family/84043

A version for people with learning disabilities or literacy challenges is at www.cambsdasv.org.uk/website/disabilities/96819 In an emergency, always dial 999.

Tackling domestic abuse

In all, one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Even if you're lucky enough to be on the safe side of those numbers, please help those who aren't. The numbers mean abuse is likely to be happening somewhere in your street.

Consider watching online the popular short video #ListeningFromHome. It reminds us that while indoors due to the pandemic, we must all keep an ear out for domestic abuse nearby. If you hear it, don't just be a bystander. Call the police.

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by the charity Refuge is a confidential, non-judgmental service, staffed by highly trained women. They're available at Freephone 0808-2000-247, 24 hours a day. Or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk, where there's live Chat help Mon-Fri, 3-10pm.

They provide emotional support, giving the caller information on their rights and options. And they can help you access services like legal advice, mental health support, and housing in a safe refuge if necessary.

Pharmacies help abuse victims

Ask for ANI is a confidential codeword scheme that helps victims of domestic abuse tell their local pharmacy that they need help. To those in the know, ANI means 'Action Needed Immediately'.

If a victim asks for 'ANI', pharmacy staff will know the person needs an emergency police response or specialist support. They'll invite them into a safe, private consultation room. They check whether the person wants the police called. Or if it's not an immediate emergency, they put them in contact with a domestic abuse helpline or local support service.

Free rail tickets are also available for abuse victims to travel to a safe refuge. For details, visit www.womensaid.org.uk/rail-to-refuge or phone any of the support numbers listed earlier, like the Domestic Abuse Helpline at Freephone 0808-2000-247.

Tackling climate change

Protecting and enhancing your environment

City Homes are looking for households - including some with children - willing to take on a Slim Your Bin challenge. This fun challenge just means reducing the amount of unrecyclable rubbish you send to landfill. (You could even reduce the amount you put out for recycling too, if you want.) Participants can be featured in Open Door, if they wish to be.

Council staff will support and advise you on ways to 'slim' your rubbish bin so you reduce, for instance, from two rubbish bins to one, or from a 240-litre bin to a 140-litre one. The staff have done this in their own homes and found it can be fun as well as effective.

There are so many ways you can reduce your rubbish, which in turn reduces your carbon footprint, helps tackle climate change, and helps look after our beautiful city. For instance, you could take action to:

- recycle more
- buy products with less packaging - especially packaging that can't be recycled
- buy fewer items, instead saving money
- by mending, reusing, borrowing or buying second-hand

Residents living in flats recycle in their communal Blue Bin. If your flat block doesn't have one, you can request one for free online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/request-a-bin

For houses, the Council will also provide you with a free compost bin, to help get you started. This will take your waste food and green clippings, turning them into money-saving compost for your garden beds or plant pots.

Buying fruit and veg as a weekly 'Veg Box' delivered to your door eliminates large amounts of plastic wrapping and trays. Or getting a traditional milk delivery means glass bottles that are always taken away, reused and recycled.

For advice on how to Slim Your Bin, see the range of guidance from the Council's Recycling Team at www.cambridge.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-rubbish Or phone 01223-458282, telling them you want advice to start slimming your bin. For tips to get started, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/plastic-recycling-campaign



Bird Box Gallery by residents

The Bird Box Gallery is a community-led project displaying local art-works outdoors, for passers-by to enjoy during a socially-distanced walk in the Birdwood Road area.

The works are displayed in frames or 'Bird Boxes' in hedges along St Thomas's Square, in the area of Birdwood Road Residents' Association. The gallery has exhibited 12 artists, and has 700 Instagram followers. Local exhibitors have included a teaching assistant, a recent graduate and a pensioner with Parkinson's.

With a Bird Box Festival during 2021, any Cambridge resident can submit any creative work for display there (max 25cm high & wide, 1.2cm deep). Or they can volunteer to host a Bird Box art display in their own hedge! To get involved, visit www.instagram.com/birdbox_gallery or email Birdboxgallery@gmail.com

Residents boost wildlife and biodiversity

The City Council's Nature Reserve Ranger has worked with a group of volunteer residents to create a pond at Wenvoe Meadow, a successful new wildlife site in Cherry Hinton.

Adding any water feature to a garden boosts biodiversity, and nature reserves are no different. And given recent droughts and extreme summer temperatures in our region, it's important to add to and improve water features on our city's nature reserves.

Wenvoe Meadow in Cherry Hinton is a small pocket of land that, with a little tweaking, had the potential to become a wildlife haven. There was space to create a pond ten metres wide. A hired mini digger removed soil and after some landscaping, a sand layer was added, then the underlay and pond liner. Then came the rain, filling it naturally!

The project is aiming for dragonflies, but all native species are welcome! Residents are excited to watch this new wildlife pond get established. Visit www.lnr.cambridge.gov.uk for more on the city's nature reserves.

And if there's a little pool or water feature in your own garden, you'll soon see wildlife visiting your mini nature reserve. Gardens free of pesticides and herbicides are a stronghold for amphibians. It's easy to create conditions for them to thrive.

Smooth newts, frogs and toads return to ponds to breed in early Spring, but spend most of their time on dry land. So have planting, log piles or compost heaps nearby for cover and food. They also love old flowerpots or loose paving slabs. And providing a 6-inch gap at ground-level on your boundary lets amphibians and hedgehogs move between gardens. But don't collect frogspawn for your pond, as it can introduce diseases or invasive plants. And don't add goldfish as they'll eat young amphibians and insects.

If you don't have a garden where you can nurture wildlife, why not volunteer at your local Nature Reserve? Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/streets-and-open-spaces-volunteers, email sosvolunteers@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458084.

Residents' Garden Competition

The 2021 Residents' Garden Competition will focus on gardening that protects wildlife. All council tenants and leaseholders are welcome, whether you have a big garden, a veg patch or just a few hanging baskets.

Groups, kids, balcony gardeners, first-time gardeners - all are welcome. Prizes sponsored by Scotsdales, the Botanic Gardens and Lubbe Bulbs are worth hundreds of pounds in gardening supplies.

Your application form must be submitted by 5pm on 30th June, 2021. Friendly judges will visit your garden on the 15th of July. And the prize-giving ceremony is likely to be in October. To find out more or request your application form:

- email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk
- or phone 01223-458323

Message from the fraud police

Unfortunately, there has been a surge of fraud and scamming crimes during the Covid-19 crisis. By summer 2020 alone, over £16 million had been lost to fraudsters profiting from the crisis. So the police are urging the public to look out for scams like the following.

Holiday scams include fake offers for accommodation, refunds and travel deals. Ticket fraud surges whenever pubs, restaurants, theatres and cinemas reopen, and demand for tickets and reservations is high. So only buy tickets from the venue's own box office or a reputable ticket site.

The UK police department who tackle fraud are called Action Fraud. They are warning the public to also take extra care when shopping online. By last summer, over 16,000 had fallen victim to online shopping fraud during the Covid-19 lockdown. So the Financial Ombudsman has issued the following recommendations for us all.

Do...

- Create strong passwords, with different ones for different accounts

- Carefully research any company, product or service you haven't used before
- Reject offers that come out of the blue and deals that seem too good to be true
- Keep evidence of all your online purchases, eg. emailed receipts and order confirmations
- Pay with a credit card or payment service like PayPal, rather than by bank transfers
- Phone your bank or credit provider straight away if you suspect fraud
- Report any possible scams to the police at Action Fraud (contact details below)

Don't...

- Don't give personal information to unknown callers over the phone or at your door
- Don't click links in emails or texts that look suspicious, or if you don't know the sender
- Don't ever feel rushed or pressurised into buying something
- Don't hesitate to ask a friend or relative their opinion if you're not sure something is legitimate
- If you think you've been scammed, don't keep it to yourself - report it straight away

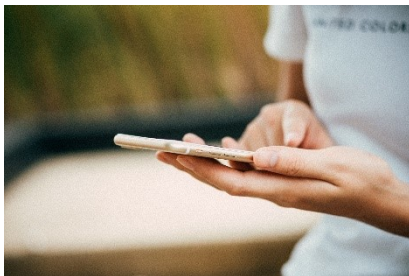
If do you notice a scam or fall victim to one, report it to the police immediately at Action Fraud, either online at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by phone at 0300-123-2040.

And if you sign up at www.actionfraud.police.uk/sign-up-for-action-fraud-alert, the fraud police will keep you informed about the latest scams to look out for, and how best to protect yourself.

For other forms of crime or anti-social behaviour problems in your area, report them to your local policing team:

- by phone at 101
- online at www.cambs.police.uk
- or online anonymously at crimestoppers-uk.org

Important contact details



Your My Cambridge account and your Housing Services account online

www.cambridge.gov.uk (top right corner)

Cambridge Virtual Community Centre

For support during the Covid-19 crisis visit www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc

Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline

Tel: 0808-2000-247 (Freephone, no cost)

Visit www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Council payments by phone

Tel: 01223-457779, with bank card

Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage

Tel: 01223-457070

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tenants

Contact the City Council in Sign Language

Register at <https://signlive.co.uk>, then dial 01223-457000: a live Sign Language interpreter will interpret during your call

Repairs

Tel: 01223-457060; or 0300-303-8389 for out of hours emergency repairs

Council Tax

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457790

Housing for Older People, Visiting Support Service, Community Alarms

E: independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457199

Home-Link lettings

Visit www.home-link.org.uk

Tel: 01223-457918

Report tenancy fraud

E: fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 0800-328-0572 (confidential Freephone)

Report anti-social behaviour

E: asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457950

Housing & Council Tax Benefits

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457775

Bins, recycling, street-cleaning

Visit <http://bins.cambridge.gov.uk>

Tel: 01223-458282

Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours

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

Bulky waste collection

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/arrange-a-bulky-waste-collection

Tel: 01223-458282

Noise complaints (a reduced service)

E: env.health@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457900

Out of hours: 0300-303-8389

Council emergencies out of hours

Tel: 0300-3038389

Complaints

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions.

The City Council's partners for housing

Mears gas servicing

Freephone 03332-070-766, including out of hours; (for leaseholders' gas emergencies, tel. 0800-111-999)

TSG Services

E: enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk

Tel: 01223-828777

Suicide Awareness

If you or someone else feels suicidal, dial 111, then option 2, for help from NHS mental health professionals. Stayingsafe.net is a free website offering practical help for people with suicidal thoughts, and for those caring for them.