

Open Door, Summer 2025

For the Tenants & Leaseholders of Cambridge City Council



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Message from Samantha Shimmon, Assistant Director

Welcome to this Summer edition of Open Door.

As part of the improvements that we are making to modernise the City Council, we need you to tell us more about who you are, so that we can better tailor our services and support for your household and your estate.

An article inside this edition explains how we will do this. Our forthcoming Getting to Know You survey will improve our communication loop with you, so that we know more about your specific needs.

In this edition you can see what you have told us this year about your satisfaction levels with each aspect of your housing service. And you can see our ongoing Improvement Plan that uses this feedback loop to improve services for you each year.

We let you know about the new Resident Involvement Strategy that we'll soon be developing for involving you better in your services.

But the most fun part of this edition is the many pages of amazing free activities for you around the city this summer, funded by the City Council or our partners. They range from days out at Milton Country Park to the colourful street festival on the August Bank Holiday weekend.

There is also a wide range of free activities specifically for children and families. It includes our own fun-filled Hello Summer programme for families. And we remind you about the free lunches for children all around the city during the school holidays.

This edition also reminds you that your Community Centres are there waiting for you, as vibrant hubs in your local area. And we invite you, at this lovely time of year, to consider making your own street healthier as one of the city's Happy Bee Streets.

Meanwhile, an article inside here responds to residents' request for more clarity on the difference between what we call 'responsive' repairs that we do at your request, and the repairs that we do as part of our rolling planned maintenance programme.

Please do enjoy the summer in our beautiful, diverse city. And continue to email us your feedback or suggestions for articles at opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Remember too that Open Door is overseen and guided by a Residents' Editorial Panel of tenants and leaseholders. Please let us know if you'd be interested in joining them.

With best wishes, Samantha Shimmon

Why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper?

It's easy to read on any device with wifi, saving on paper and carbon. To receive it by email instead of by post, visit <https://camcit.co/opendooremail>

A Residents' Editorial Panel meets to help guide and edit the content of every Open Door edition. They ensure that Open Door continues to reflect residents' needs and interests. To get involved, please email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Getting to know you

Your feedback in satisfaction surveys tells us that you want to see better communication between you and the Council. You want us to listen more closely to

who you are, and what you are telling us you need. And you want to see that we act on what you have told us.

So we are taking steps to get to know you better. We want to build up a much richer understanding of who our tenants are, and your needs. Year on year, we will increase our understanding of things like:

- exactly who our tenants are (your age, gender, ethnicity, any disabilities you may have, etc.)
- any vulnerabilities or needs your household has
- any characteristics you have that could leave you prone to discrimination
- how you would prefer us to communicate with you

The Social Housing Regulator now requires us to collect this information - and to show that we are using it to improve services and support for you. Later this year we will run a Getting to Know You Survey so you can tell us about yourself and your needs. (There will be three £100 vouchers to be won.)

In the article below about tenants nationwide, you can see what a rich picture this kind of information can give, to better focus services towards tenants' needs, as individuals and as households.

We want to create that rich picture of you, our council tenants here in Cambridge. Once we know your needs much better, we and our partner agencies can provide you with many free support services that you may currently be missing out on.

Importantly, a third of you say you don't yet consider that the Council treats all tenants 'fairly and with respect'. This is especially important around 'protected characteristics' such as age, race, gender, disability and religion, which are legally protected from discrimination.

We have a legal duty to be much more aware of these identities among our tenants. This richer understanding of your needs will enable us to better tailor our own services for you, and to connect you up with other services and supports that you may need or be eligible for, that you are not yet receiving.

This more personal approach will hopefully enable not just two thirds but all of our tenants to soon feel that, as required in the Housing Regulator's consumer standards, we treat you all 'fairly and with respect'.



Who are UK social tenants?

Obviously, there is no such thing as a typical social housing tenant - their lives are as varied as the rest of the population. But below are some insights about the lives of those renting social housing around the UK over the past few years. Our forthcoming Getting To Know You Survey will help us understand our own council tenants here in Cambridge this well too...

Among social housing tenants nationwide...

British nationality: 90% of recent social lettings were to British nationals.

Younger generation: 45% of new lead tenants were aged 16–35.

More women: 56% of all social renters are women.

Children & parents: 31% of social rented households have children, and 18% of tenants are single parents.

Affordability of rent: Households spend about 31% of their income on rent.

Disabilities: 54% of social rented households include at least one person with a disability.

Mental health: 21% of new tenancies included at least one person with a long-term mental health condition. Overall, 33% of all social housing tenants experience mental health issues (compared to 20% of homeowners).

Employment: 40% of tenants are employed. The other 60% are either retired, unable to work due to illness or disability, a full-time carer, or unemployed.

This is the kind of rich picture of knowledge that we need to build up about our council tenants here in Cambridge. Then we can deliver much more effective services and support to you. To do this, we need that clearer picture of your needs - whether for instance you have needs around your health and any disabilities; around children and childcare; or needs for job training or employment opportunities.

Your satisfaction with your housing

What you said...

An independent company was recently commissioned to do a satisfaction survey with all the City Council's tenants. The national Social Housing Regulator now requires all social housing landlords to do this type of survey annually, with specific questions called Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

As your landlord, we must report the results back to the Regulator, who monitor our performance. Here in Cambridge, all City Council tenants were invited to take part, either online or by post. The survey was completed and returned by 1,596 tenants. Thank you very much for your participation.

Tenants' 'Overall satisfaction with the Council as your landlord' is always considered the 'headline' result. This scored 73%, up by 6% since last year. Other scores are summarised below. Some show the percentage who agree, for instance, that they have a 'Well maintained home', a 'Safe home', or that it's 'Easy & affordable to heat'. Other scores show the percentage of tenants who feel the Council is 'Easy to deal with', or that it 'Listens & takes action'.

Most scores have improved over the past two years. But how we handle complaints still scores low, and fell a further percent this year.

So the most important thing is the yearly cycles of our 'You Said It, We Did It' Improvement Plan, derived from your survey feedback, to improve services you were less satisfied with. The next edition of Open Door will outline the Improvement Plan derived from this year's results. Below here, you can see where the past year's Improvement Plan has been successful.

To see the detailed report of this year's satisfaction results by the independent surveyor, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement. Their report includes useful comparisons with the satisfaction rates of tenants at other council landlords. Below is your own satisfaction scoring here in Cambridge this year.

Key Results

Satisfaction rates have mostly improved since last year.

73% are satisfied with the overall service - up by 6%.

Highest satisfaction is with the repairs service, at 78%.

Next is satisfaction with the time taken for repairs, at 76%.

But still low is satisfaction with our handling of anti-social behaviour, at 50%.

And our handling of complaints, with only 28% satisfied, down 1% since last year.

Here are the main percentages of tenants' satisfaction with specific aspects of their home and the Council's services:

71% Well maintained home

57% Council's positive contribution to neighbourhood

73% Safe home

50% Council's handling of anti-social behaviour

55% Home is easy and affordable to heat

76% Time taken for last repair

67% Repairs - Overall satisfaction

64% Communal areas clean and well maintained

64% Council keeps them informed

70% Council treats all fairly & with respect

28% Council's complaints handling

69% Council is easy to deal with

Tracking progress over the past two years, we see there has been a gradual improvement in most services of between 1% and 6%. The two exceptions are 'That the Council keeps you informed', which stayed the same at 64%; and Complaints Handling, which dropped by 1% from 29% to 28%.

'You Said It, We Did It' improvement loops

Each year, your feedback drives a 'You Said It, We Did It' Improvement Plan for services that you were less satisfied with. Open Door shows you how the plan is improving services each year - or not!

For instance last year, only 64% of you were satisfied that your home was being well maintained. So the Council created a new Repairs & Planned Maintenance

Policy to improve consistency across all contractors, and to intervene quickly if repairs were delayed beyond expected timescales. Thankfully, these improvements are reflected in the 7% increase in your satisfaction with the maintenance of your home this year.

Similarly, last year only 67% of you were satisfied that your home was safe. Across the year Open Door showed you how the Council's Improvement Plan was tackling that issue. And this year your satisfaction with home safety has risen by 6%.

The next edition will bring you the Improvement Plan for the year ahead, showing how it will tackle low satisfaction with our handling of complaints and of anti-social behaviour.

The Make It Right campaign for tenants

The government is running an important campaign to ensure that social housing tenants feel empowered to complain about problems with their housing - and that their landlord responds correctly.

Below, the Make It Right campaign recommends 3 Steps for residents. (You are offered these steps already in every edition of Open Door.)

How do I get an issue sorted?

To get an issue sorted you can:

1. Report it to your landlord
2. Make a formal complaint to them
3. Escalate to the Housing Ombudsman

You can take these 3 steps for lots of issues, including:

- mould or damp
- poor insulation
- broken doors or windows
- leaking pipes
- other repairs
- anti-social behaviour
- problems accessing your home
- poor service from your landlord

Step 1. Report it to your landlord

First, report the issue to your landlord. (See the end of this edition for our contact details.)

Step 2. Complain to your landlord

If you've reported an issue and you're not happy with the outcome, complain to your landlord. (We have a webpage with a form to fill in, as well as an email address and phone number you can use - see the article below.) Landlords must take your complaint seriously, and cannot punish you in any way for raising a problem or making a complaint.

Most landlords have 2 stages to their complaints process:

Stage 1: They must respond within 10 working days of a complaint being logged.

Stage 2: If a complaint is more complex and goes to stage 2, they must respond within 20 working days.

Your landlord will send you a final response, which should explain how they plan to fix things.

Step 3. Escalate the issue to the Housing Ombudsman

If you're not happy with your landlord's final response, escalate it to the Housing Ombudsman. They are free, impartial and will investigate thoroughly. Their website is at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk You can phone them at 0300-111-3000 or email them at info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Their investigations can take up to six months, depending on the case. But if they rule against a landlord, the landlord must act within 6-8 weeks. Last year the Ombudsman made landlords pay over £6 million in compensation to residents. For more information, visit <https://housinghub.campaign.gov.uk> On there you can watch a 1-minute video explaining again how to raise issues and make a complaint.

Or for support in using the Housing Ombudsman, please visit <https://socialhousingcomplaints.campaign.gov.uk>

Your quarterly performance snapshot

Overseen by your elected resident representatives, the Council has annual performance targets for each service for your home and estate. Below we say whether these services reached their targets in January to March 2025.

Homes with valid gas safety cert: 98.5%

Target: 100%

Households saved from homelessness: 377

Target: 450

Stage 1 complaints resolved on time: 82.1%

Target: 60.5%

Satisfied with estate services: 94.1%

Target: 90%

Families into B&Bs, awaiting homes: 5

Target: no more than 5

Satisfied with recent repair: 79.5%

Target: 80%

Your elected resident representatives help to monitor performance measures like these. If you are interested in getting involved, or in finding out about any estate walkabouts that might be planned in your area, please email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458323.

An easy Complaints Process

If you are ever unhappy with a service or response from your council landlord, please try first to resolve it with the staff involved. But if you are still unhappy with our service, please use our simple Complaints Process so we can put things right for you. On our website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions, or by phoning us at 01223-457000, just tell us...

- your name, contact details and the details of your complaint
- what you would like us to do to put things right
- whether you have raised this issue with us before and if so, who was dealing with it

We will tell you who is dealing with your complaint, aiming to reply within 10 working days, and if we need longer, we'll say why.

If you are ever unhappy with the final outcome of a formal complaint to us, you could then take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, the independent investigator described in the article above.

Some changes ahead

Cambridge City Council tenants and leaseholders are represented at the heart of the Council by four tenant representatives and one leaseholder. They are tenants Justyna Ulman-Jaworska, Diana Minns, Harmony Birch and Mandy Powell-Hardy, and leaseholder Diane Best. They are involved in the big decisions about your housing, alongside City Councillors. Below is a recent interview with Mandy Powell-Hardy.

As part of the City Council's overall Transformation process, changes are being made to the way all the Council's decision-making committees are structured. Your resident reps will still be involved in the new process for making high-level housing decisions. Forthcoming editions of Open Door will explain the detail of those changes.

Your resident reps' roles - along with many grassroots roles that involve you in your housing service - are part of our Resident Involvement Strategy. It defines all the different ways that we involve you in shaping your housing service, and our feedback loops for consulting and communicating with you.

We will soon be consulting residents to help us draw up the next phase of our Resident Involvement Strategy. Please watch this space for ways to get involved and help shape it.

Resident rep interview

'Hello all, my name is Mandy Powell-Hardy. I've lived in Cambridge for 23 years. I stood for election onto Housing Scrutiny Committee to help me regain confidence after a stroke in 2013.

Since then I have become very confident at doing lots of different sorts of volunteer work, as well as being on the Scrutiny Committee. I used to do Green Inspections out on the estates too. But now we have council staff and cleaners who go around with us to see how the cleaning and maintenance is going. They take note of things that may need addressing.

It is great to get out there to see how tenants and leaseholders are doing on the estates. I attend other meetings too, like the Residents & Officers' Asset Management meetings, and the Recycling Group.

I also represent tenants' interests at consultation meetings of the Housing Development Agency, and at Estate Liaison meetings. And sometimes I give up my Saturdays to help with Community Clean-Up Days. (See about them in an article in this edition.)

I have learned so much over the time that I have been doing this. There is always something new to learn. I find the Housing Scrutiny Committee meetings so interesting, especially when they're about the new social housing that the Council is getting built around the city.

We also closely follow the improvements the Council is making in new homes to help reach the city's carbon reduction goals. And there's the whole programme of work to bring existing council homes up to today's high standards.

Being a Housing Scrutiny Committee member means I am helping to get these goals achieved. So I really enjoy everything I'm involved in.

In all of our involvement roles, we need resident reps who have some time to give, and are willing to learn how to influence things for the better. To contact us anytime, just email hsc.residents@gmail.com or phone 01223-458323 to leave us a message.'

Or visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/housing-scrutiny-committee-elected-tenant-and-leaseholder-representatives

Free summer activities

'Splash Pads' water play

Kids paddle and play for free at the city's many Splash Pads, set in our beautiful green outdoor spaces. For instance, elaborate water-play facilities are provided for free by the Council:

- at Coleridge Recreation Ground: tractor-themed play, interactive water-features and a crawling-tube
- at King's Hedges Recreation Ground: 14 water features with an 'Outer Space' theme
- behind Abbey Pool: 11 water features with tipping buckets, water cannons and spray jets

To locate all the city's free public water-play equipment, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/splashpads

Kids adore these Splash Pads in the warm weather. Research shows that this water play is excellent for child development. As well as being relaxing, therapeutic and

good physical exercise, it helps them develop motor skills, problem-solving abilities and social skills. While parents and carers relax with a picnic nearby...

The Splash Pads will be open until 14th September. Before visiting a specific one, please phone 01223-446100 to confirm that it's open.

Free paddling pools

Many of these are on the same greens as the city's Splash Pads. For instance, Coleridge Recreation ground has a paddling pool.

Lammas Land is a beautiful secluded green in Newnham with a paddling pool, accessed from Barton Road. And the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall have two paddling pools.

To locate the city's free public paddling pools, see the map at www.cambridge.gov.uk/map-of-swimming-pools

Free day out at Milton Park

At Milton Country Park, the best things in life are free. Find it at Cambridge Road, Milton, CB24 6AZ (Bus Citi 2, the Tesco stop). The Park offers you 95 acres of lush woodlands, serene lakes and winding paths to explore for free, as well as the free activities below. And it has a lovely lakeside cafe for lunch or snacks.

Orienteering adventures: The park has a permanent free orienteering course. Family groups or anyone can improve their navigation skills across diverse terrain, immersed in the park's natural beauty.

Playgrounds for all ages: Children are in for a treat with the park's thoughtfully designed playgrounds. From equipment tailored for pre-schoolers to expansive

wooden climbing frames for older kids, the play areas include a natural play zone filled with trees, encouraging imaginative play and physical activity.

The Active Mile: A Path to Wellness: This free, self-guided route encourages visitors of all ages to walk, run, or wheel their way around a mile-long trail. It's set among the park's scenic vistas.

Table-tennis in the open air: Adding a touch of sport to the natural setting, two outdoor table-tennis tables await you near the playground's edge. Visitors can borrow bats and balls from the park office, for an easy spontaneous game amidst the greenery.

Bird watching: The Park is a haven for bird enthusiasts. From over-wintering ducks to the elusive kingfishers of summer, the park's bird residents offer a dynamic display throughout the year.

For more information, visit www.miltoncountrypark.org/free-activities

Music in the Parks all summer long

One of the city's favourite summer traditions, Music in the Parks makes a welcome return this year to some of Cambridge's most beautiful green spaces. The concerts, free and open to all, are on a range of Sunday afternoons until early September. Lasting two hours, they all start at 3pm.

Everyone is welcome - just gather your friends or family, bring a picnic, and enjoy a relaxed afternoon of free music in the sun. There's something for every musical taste from funk, soul and blues to choirs, jazz, swing and brass bands.

And as part of our Folk in the City celebration, there's a special folk concert on Sunday August 3rd with The Boxwood Chessmen (a semi-acoustic roots band) and award-winning indie-folk duo Elizabeth & Jameson.

Dates & venues (all at 3-5pm)

- Sunday 20 July, Jesus Green: Big 10 and Mirada
- Sunday 3 August, Cherry Hinton Hall:
The Boxwood Chessmen and Elizabeth & Jameson
- Sunday 10 August, Arbury Town Park: Soham Comrades Band
- Sunday 31 August, Coleridge Recreation Ground: Upbeat Big Band
- Sunday 7 September, Trumpington Recreation Ground: Special Groove

Delicious refreshments will be on sale from NapolEat Pizza, Aperol van and Cambridge favourite, Jack's Gelato! The event is supported by Cambridge BID.

For more details and updates, visit www.camcityevents.co.uk/what-we-do/music-in-the-parks

Free Folk in the City Family Day

Come along to the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall on Saturday 2 August, 1-8pm, to enjoy a whole day of fantastic folk music. It includes a fun early-evening traditional Ceilidh dance for all!

It's part of this year's Folk in the City events. This special afternoon will feature top artists including Sean O' Hanrahan, Kate Griffin & Ford Collier, Sam Sweeney & Grace Smith, Katherine Priddy, plus Jon Boden and the Remnant Kings!

The afternoon will open with a performance by some of the city's young musicians, sharing music they've learned at this year's Folk Summer School.

It's followed by a special kids' show with CBeebies star Nick Cope. And the event finishes with The Big Ceilidh, led by the Cambridge Ceilidh All-Stars!

For details visit www.camcityevents.co.uk or www.facebook.com/CamCityEvents

Free street festival in August



The August Bank Holiday weekend (on Saturday 23 & Sunday 24 August, 11am-4pm) sees the return of the Out of the Ordinary Street Festival, the annual street festival in our city centre. Thousands enjoyed the festival last summer, and there's more to come this year.

Cambridge will see some of the very best performance artists on a mission to entertain! Events will be spectacular, comic, colourful and acrobatic.

They will take place around the city centre streets, and on Christ's Pieces near the bus station, where people can relax, eat and drink, and watch fantastic acts. There will be visual comedy shows, music and dance, wellbeing activities and local food vendors.

Local dance schools, musicians, artists and performers will showcase their talents. There will also be young local bands and singer-songwriters. Students from the festival's Dance Summer School will perform a specially created piece as a curtain-raiser for Vanhulle Dance Theatre's performance.

Jugglers will create an interactive circus street show full of banter and spectacular tricks. There'll be a giant trapeze rig, and a giant unicycle that just won't stay still! One vibrant street theatre duo will be a mother and daughter, interacting as cookery chef and clown! Join them on a joyous journey of plate spinning, food juggling and fire blazing. Another comedy street show will see clumsy carpet-layers transforming everyday spaces into hilarious landscapes. Expect plenty of slapstick and acrobatics.

There will be a street show where two hapless film-makers attempt to create a blockbuster movie, armed only with cardboard props, ridiculous costumes, and audience participation - it's cinematic chaos!

There will be mesmerizing body artistry with hula hoops, as well as captivating dance and physical theatre - lots of visuals with a touch of magic. You will be treated to poetic and thought-provoking performances, breathtaking physical displays, playful interactions, and a celebration of summer living. The festival is supported by Cambridge BID and Cambridge Radio.

For more details of all events, visit www.camcityevents.co.uk and www.facebook.com/CamCityEvents

Free summer activities for families

A bit stuck for what to do with the children this summer? The Council's Active Lifestyles team has it covered for you, with our Active Family events. Activities include a fun Family Play Zone where you can grab a skipping rope, space hopper, hula hoop or catcher.

Structured activities include football and other ball games, short tennis, orienteering challenges, skating and scooting. There will also be skipping workshops, archery, table tennis, crazy golf, a bouldering wall, boxing, family fitness sessions, dance sessions and more! We'll have activity challenges with prizes to be won, and info about free ways to continue enjoying activities year-round.

Remember to:

- wear comfortable clothes and shoes
- bring water bottles, snacks and a picnic blanket for relaxing on

All events run from 10am to 2pm on the following Tuesdays:

- Tues 29th July, Coldhams Common
- Tues 5th August, Trumpington Recreation Ground
- Tues 12th August, St Albans Recreation Ground
- Tues 19th August, Coleridge Recreation Ground

Want to join in? Visit our website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/summer-events

Or follow us on Facebook@[getmovingcam](https://www.facebook.com/getmovingcam)

Or visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport-physical-activity-and-wellbeing



Free for families this summer

The City Council's Hello Summer booklet also provides a huge range of free, fun-filled family activities. Paper copies of the booklet are available at schools and community centres.

This year the Hello Summer programme offers a mix of drop-in sessions, bookable activities, community events, music and play, to help keep families active and entertained. Bring friends along for fun-filled days of arts & crafts, culture and discovery. There's something for everyone, regardless of age or ability!

To stay updated, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/summer-events

The City Council is supporting lots of local organisations to provide free family-friendly activities during the school summer holidays. They include...

- Sports coaching sessions
- A family football tournament
- Climbing and games of laser tag
- Weekly outdoor play in the city's green spaces with Woodcraft Folk
- Family martial arts sessions
- Foraging walks at Milton Country Park with Earth and Mind
- Free family swimming lessons
- Dance Academy for family dance, yoga, and mindfulness
- Everybody Can Fish - family fishing at Milton Country Park
- Red Hen nature sessions with Wellies in the Woods

- Freebie Fridays with a variety of summer activities at Cambridge Sports Lakes, Milton Country Park
- Easy 'Come & Try It' gymnastic sessions
- Nutrition workshops for families
- Expeditions for Everyone – city walks for neurodivergent families

For more information please see www.cambridge.gov.uk/summer-events

Free, friendly lunches in the school holidays

Around the city during school holidays there are free lunches and activities for children and their families at the venues listed below. Just turn up! Addresses and details are also available at website <https://cambridgesustainablefood.org> Click on the Holiday Lunches button on their home page.

At City Council Community Centres:

- Mon 28 July, Meadows: Activities 11am-12, lunch 12-1pm
- Tues 29 July, Brown's Field: Activities 10.30am-12, then lunch
- Wed 30 July, Darwin Green: Lunch 12 noon, then activities till 2pm
- Mon 18 August, Meadows: Activities 11am-12, then lunch
- Tues 19 August, Brown's Field: Activities 10.30am-12, then lunch
- Tues 19 August, Trumpington Pavilion: Games on the green 4-6pm, then hot dogs
- Wed 27 August, Clay Farm: Activities 10.30am-12, then lunch

There are also free lunches during school holidays at these venues:

- City Church Holiday Lunch
- Arbury Road Baptist Church

- Storey's Field Holiday Lunch
- St James' Holiday Lunch

For full details of the dates, times and venues of the lunches above, visit <https://cambridgesustainablefood.org> and click Holiday Lunches on their home page.

Use your Community Centres

Our community centres can be the heartbeat of our neighbourhoods. Welcoming you with open arms, they are spaces where you can make connections with others, learn skills, and make great memories.

Whether you're looking to access some support, join a class, meet new people or just get out of the house and hang out, they really will welcome you.

With 16 of them spread around the city, there's always a local Community Centre near you - just drop in and look around!

For an interactive map with information and contact details for each, see the City Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/map-of-community-centres

For details about each centre, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/community-centres

All summer, they will be offering free family activities close to home. For instance, why not pop in to the Meadows Centre in Arbury for a look at what's on offer? It's at 1 St Catharine's Road, Arbury, CB4 3XJ, phone 01223-508140 or email meadows@cambridge.gov.uk

Or visit Brown's Field Community Centre in East Chesterton and sign out a free 'Borrow Bag' full of sports equipment and games ideas to play together as a family at home!

These vibrant hubs have so many free or low-cost activities and services that will enrich your family's lives. Many also have cafes and patios or gardens where you can just drop in, enjoy a coffee and relax as long as you like.

For instance, Brown's Field Community Centre in East Chesterton provides a Lego club, soft play sessions, and the Veterans' Shed for veterans of the armed forces, helping people make connections across the generations. It's at 31A Green End Road, CB4 1RU; phone 01223- 420309 or email brownsfield@cambridge.gov.uk

Meanwhile, Clay Farm Community Centre is a very modern facility in Trumpington. It houses a library, a café, and meeting rooms for activities, fostering a strong sense of community. Just drop in to get to know the place.

Storey's Field Community Centre is a stunning architectural landmark in Eddington. It has a diverse programme of cultural events, performances, and community activities. It's at Eddington Avenue, CB3 1AA, tel. 01223-656696, email info@storeysfieldcentre.org.uk

National Playday, 6th August

You are never too old to play! Help us celebrate National Play Day on Wednesday 6th August with the pop-up play sessions above. Community groups or organisations are welcome too.

To get involved, email Suzanne.Jackson@cambridge.gov.uk for Darwin Green, Andrea.Butler@cambridge.gov.uk for Chesterton, or Kelly.Smith@cambridge.gov.uk for Coleridge.

The theme this year is 'Spaces for Play'. It promotes the benefits of play for children of all ages, and encourages communities to create their own safe, accessible, inclusive play spaces. Have a look online at www.playday.org.uk

Children and young people need these places where they can spend time together, connect with friends, and feel valued as part of their community.

For support in holding an event in your area or closing your road for a safe play event on your doorstep, email communitydevelopment@cambridge.gov.uk

Your repairs service

A responsive or planned repair? If your home needs a repair, it helps to know which type of repair it is, and who to contact. The last edition of Open Door gave a list of all those smaller repairs that are your own responsibility. Repair jobs that we do for you include both 'responsive repairs' and 'planned maintenance'. So what's the difference?

Responsive repairs are when you report to us that something needs attention. This can range from broken kitchen tiles or a broken fence to something more urgent like a leaking pipe or having no heating. We aim to resolve these as quickly as possible, depending on their level of urgency.

Where possible, we aim to fix them promptly. But if we find a repair is undoable, it may instead be added to a longer term planned maintenance programme that is scheduled for your home. Or it may even already be on that planned list scheduled for the future.

Planned maintenance involves pre-planned programmes of work that roll through estates to keep homes in good condition over time. These are bigger, long-term improvements such as replacing kitchens or bathrooms, upgrading heating systems, renewing roofs, or fitting new windows and doors or fencing.

Rather than waiting for these things to wear out, we plan these improvements in five-year cycles, often based on the age and condition of the fittings.

Planned maintenance upgrades your home, helps prevent problems before they

start, and improves energy efficiency, safety and comfort. You will always be contacted in advance when your home is coming due for this sort of planned upgrade work.

Both types of repair are important. Our responsive repairs keep your home running well day-to-day. And planned maintenance keeps it safe, modern and well looked after in the years ahead. See the article below for a further overview of both. To request a repair:

- log on to your Housing Account at <https://housing.cambridge.gov.uk/housing/www/dashboard>
- or phone 01223-457000 and ask for Repairs
- outside office hours, phone the Out-of-Hours emergency line at 0300-303- 8389

Repairs that we do for you

The list below isn't complete, but it shows the main areas that are our responsibility. (Spring Open Door listed the smaller repairs that are your own responsibility.) But if unsure, always just ask us, using the contact details in the article above.

Electrics

Please contact us if you have no power, a smoking fitting, or a faulty smoke alarm - these are emergencies. We also fix socket or switch failures, broken extractor fans, and ceiling pull cords.

Heating and hot water

We work with TSG to maintain your heating. If your boiler or radiators are more than 12 months old, phone TSG Servicing at 0800-111-4044 (24 hrs, 7 days a week). If your boiler is newer than 12 months, phone TSG Install at 01223-828777. For electric heating or new-build homes still under warranty, please phone the Council at 01223-457000 so we can advise.

Kitchens and bathrooms

If you've got a leaking pipe, broken drawer, damaged tiles or a faulty extractor fan in the kitchen, let us know. We also fix broken cistern handles, damaged shower fittings, loose panels or tiles, and seals around sinks and baths. Burst pipes or strip light failures are treated as emergencies.

Doors and windows

We respond urgently to reports of broken glass, or doors and ground-floor windows that can't be locked. For less urgent issues, like draught proofing or damaged frames, contact us and we'll assess the problem.

Stairs, walls and floors

Report any loose handrails or stair treads, damaged skirting, cracked ceilings, or broken floorboards. We will assess whether it needs to be dealt with as a quick repair or as part of a planned maintenance programme.

Outside and communal areas

We take care of roof leaks, blocked drains, broken fences and problems with communal doors, gates, lights, aerials and lifts. We also handle issues like shed doors, roof tiles, gutters, clothes lines, and intercoms.

Interview with a staff member: 'I help people to live independently at home'

'Hi, I'm Emma Hudson, the City Council's Adaptations Officer. I'm proud to play a part in helping people stay safe and independent at home. With an annual budget of £838,000, I can provide homes with disability adaptations. Stairlifts, level-access showers, ramps, hoists... The equipment is carefully chosen to meet individual needs.

Most people I support live with mobility issues or long-term health conditions. The right adaptation makes a huge difference, helping them to move around more freely, maintain their routines, and live with greater dignity and comfort. It makes this role

rewarding.

Managing the budget is important. With so many requests, I must ensure that we spend responsibly and every decision is fair and timely. I track purchases, compare quotes, and find cost-effective solutions without compromising on quality or safety. After installation, I check that everything is to a high standard: safe, comfortable, and genuinely useful to the person relying on it. If any adjustments are needed, I work with the contractors to get them sorted quickly.

I also make sure all the equipment is serviced and maintained. It's really important that things like stairlifts and hoists keep working well. So I stay on top of maintenance schedules, warranties, and service records, and respond promptly if anything goes wrong.

The work is fast-paced and heavy on detail, but I love it. Every day brings something different, and I meet residents from all walks of life. It's incredibly satisfying that our adaptations mean someone can sleep in their own bed again, or enjoy a hot shower without fear of falling, or get out into their garden for the first time in years.

It can be challenging at times, especially when demand is high. But for me, it's about more than just managing a budget or coordinating contractors. It's about making a real, positive difference in people's lives - and that's something I never take for granted.'

Disabled adaptations for you?

Would you benefit from minor home adaptations like grab rails, lever taps or half-steps, to support your mobility and safety? Contact us to discuss your needs.

For bigger changes - like stairlifts, ramps, walk-in showers, accessible kitchens or ground-floor toilets - you need assessment by an occupational therapist. To arrange this, phone the County Council at 0345-045-5202. If they approve you for

adaptations, we'll organise for the work to be done.

In some cases, it may be better to move to a more suitable property. We may offer tenants financial help with moving costs or downsizing. If you'd prefer to move, or your home can't be adapted to meet your needs, tenants can apply to move via Home-Link. An occupational therapist will help identify a home that's suitable for you.

For more information, email hia@cambshia.org, phone 01954-713330 or phone the Council at 011223-457000, asking for disabled adaptations.

Who gets our council housing?

Our Lettings Policy explains how the City Council works to fairly and transparently allocate our council homes through the Home-Link system. The policy helps ensure that our housing goes to those who need it most – whether that's because they're homeless, living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions, or they need to move for health or welfare reasons.

To apply, people fill in a form at www.home-link.org.uk. Their application is assessed and, if eligible, they are placed in a 'Band' from A to D, based on the urgency of their housing need. Band A is for the most urgent cases, like the homeless, those at serious risk, or those being discharged from hospital. Band D is for people with much lower current housing needs.

To apply, people must have a 'Local Connection', such as living or working in the area or having family here. But Armed Forces personnel and people fleeing harm are given particular consideration.

When allocating a home, we aim to give people some choice on where they will live within Cambridge. All of our decisions aim for fairness, community wellbeing and meeting legal obligations such as equality, children's welfare and adult safeguarding.

Most properties are advertised through Home-Link but in urgent cases, we may let a

home to a person without advertising it, for example if their home is being demolished or they have particular housing needs.

If a person's situation changes after applying to us, or they think we have made a wrong decision, they can request a review. We're here to help, and to make sure everyone's housing journey is as fair and supportive as possible.

You can read our full Lettings Policy at www.cambridge.gov.uk/applying-for-council-housing Or for more information, email us at cbl@cambridge.gov.uk or phone the Council at 01223-457000 and ask for our Choice-Based Lettings team.

To move between council homes

If you want to move from your current council home to another in Cambridge, you can apply through Home-Link. To register and apply, visit the website at www.home-link.org.uk/choice

If you want to leave Cambridge, use Homefinder UK instead. Visit their website at <https://homefinderuk.org>

There is a lot of demand for housing through Home-Link, so you might want to try to find another council tenant who is willing to swap properties directly with you. This is often called a Mutual Exchange. It requires the Council's permission, once you find a council tenant with whom you want to swap homes.

The HomeSwapper website can be a good starting point. It's a free service that makes applying for a mutual exchange as simple as possible. Visit their website at www.homeswapper.co.uk And for more information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/swap-your-council-home

A healthy environment for all

Around the city, the Council is changing the way we care for green spaces, making changes that are better for people, wildlife, and for the planet. Since 2019, we've been phasing out the use of herbicides on council-owned land. We no longer put them on our parks, car parks or housing estates (except when there's no alternative, like for tackling Japanese knotweed).

We've adopted safer, healthier, more sustainable methods. You may see our teams using mechanical sweepers, weed-ripping brushes and hand-held hoes. These are gentler on the environment and safer for everyone who lives, works or plays in our green spaces.

Part of this change is our Happy Bee Streets scheme. It supports interested residents to care for their street's biodiversity. See the article below for details or to get involved. In our public parks and along verges, you'll notice more areas of long grass now. These deliberate, meadow-like spaces are full of healthy life, from bumblebees and butterflies to birds and hedgehogs.

Letting the grass grow long gives insects a place to feed, shelter and reproduce. This in turn feeds birds and small mammals. Over time, wildflowers flourish, earthworms thrive, and the soil improves.

These natural corridors link up our nature reserves and commons, creating safer routes for mammals, amphibians and birds to travel and feed. They also help fight climate change by storing more carbon than mowed lawns do.

Together, all these small changes are making a big difference, to help turn Cambridge into a healthier, more biodiverse and nature-rich city.

Give a hedgehog a home

Fully half of these beloved British creatures have disappeared since 2005, due to pressure and neglect from humans. Yet they are a gardener's friend! So please don't ever use slug pellets or chemicals in your garden, as they kill hedgehogs too. Instead, let a hedgehog eat your garden pests!



Please leave some areas of your garden wild for them, with piles of leaves, logs or compost. You can also place a board against a wall, to provide cover. And make a Hedgehog Highway: just a 6-inch hole in your fence or hedge will let them pass between gardens, as they must do to eat.

Always check thoroughly for sleeping hedgehogs before using any power-tools or lighting bonfires! Provide a little 'bridge' for them to get out of any ponds, and cover holes or drains they could fall into. For lots more easy, five-minute tips like this, visit www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/hedgehogs/garden Or email us at parcs@cambridge.gov.uk for help and advice.

Join the Happy Bee Streets scheme

Want your street to be a Happy Bee Street? This scheme supports groups of residents to make their street richer in biodiversity, and to make it healthier by being free of herbicide chemicals.

In this scheme, the City Council stops using herbicides on your street, and stops weeding there. We train and support your residents' group to remove any unwanted 'weeds', such as excessive buddleia. But you keep the diverse wildflower plants that attract and support bees, butterflies and birdlife.



Your grass verges will still be cut by the Council, and we will still sweep your road gutters. The Council will also support you with tools and advice to manage your pavements naturally, benefitting your street's health too. We'll also give you health and safety training, and public liability insurance for your volunteer activities on your street.

The scheme is part of the Council's Herbicide Reduction Plan, and is very popular with residents. Everyone who volunteers to be a Happy Bee Streets resident gets enrolled as a Streets and Open Spaces volunteer. You'd be joining over 100 Cambridge residents who are already enjoying improving their local environment.

There are residents already in the scheme in:

- Arbury, at Hazelwood Close

- Coleridge, at Corrie Road
- Petersfield, at Gwydir Street
- Queen Edith's, at Chalk Grove
- Romsey, at Great Eastern Street, Montreal Road & Square, Natal Road and Sedgwick Street
- West Chesterton, at Ascham Road, Atherton Close and Gurney Way
- in the Market area, at Eden Street
- in the Abbey area, at Priory Road

The next article below explains how to apply. If approved, you and neighbours would:

- manage unwanted weeds and plants on your pavements by hand
- prune your public shrub areas
- adopt more ways to improve your local biodiversity, like planting wildflowers and creating areas for wildlife

For information or to apply, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/happy-bee-scheme-help-improve-biodiversity-on-your-street or email us at happybeestreet@cambridge.gov.uk

Steps for joining the Happy Bee Streets scheme...

- your street must be in a 20mph zone, to ensure activities can be done safely

- some other residents of your street must show support for joining the scheme, and be willing to sign up as volunteers

To get started, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/happy-bee-scheme-help-improve-biodiversity-on-your-street Just use the online form to express an interest in your street becoming a Happy Bee Street.

A Community Engagement Officer from the City Council will come and do a site visit, and give you guidance on how many volunteers might be needed to manage weeds on your street's pavements by hand.

They can also help you do a street survey to gain the support of other households, and they'll help set up those who want to take part.

Loft spaces above your flat

If you live in a leasehold flat, you may be wondering about the loft space above your home. It might seem like a handy place to use for storage or for running utility services through.

But it is important to know that lofts are not included in your lease, and you don't have the right to access or use them.

The loft space remains the property of the City Council. Your lease clearly states that you should not enter the loft or allow anyone else to do so, except in emergencies - for example, to deal with a burst pipe, wasp nest, or similar issue.

This means that:

- you must never store anything in the loft space.
- the Council does not give permission to run wires or services through any loft spaces (such as for extractor fans or boiler flues)

If there is ever a problem with the loft above your flat - such as gaps, holes, or signs

of pests - please contact the City Council's repairs team. Phone 01223-457000 (or in an out of hours emergency, phone 0300-303-8389).

Or log in to request a repair on our housing portal at housing.cambridge.gov.uk/housing/www/dashboard for repairs or email housing.repairs@cambridge.gov.uk

We will send operatives to address the issue. If pest control is needed (squirrels being the most common issue, for example), we will handle that too.

Note that some loft spaces still contain old water tanks that were once shared between several flats. These tanks may have been drained and taken out of use, but that is not always the case. In some cases, a tank may still be active if a flat in the block hasn't yet switched to a combi boiler.

If you think the tank above your home is still in use and may not need to be, please let our repairs team know. We will be happy to visit to inspect it and take any action required. For more information, please visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders, email leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk or phone the Council at 01223-457835.

Legal changes to your lease

Are you marrying, divorcing, or changing your name? Transferring the ownership of your leasehold property to someone else? These are just some of the reasons why your Service Charge Account could end up appearing to carry the 'wrong' name.

When a leasehold property is sold, it is a requirement of the lease that a Notice of Transfer is served upon the City Council as your landlord within one calendar month. This gives us formal, legal notification about who has purchased the property, when they purchased it and their correspondence address if applicable. This Notice of Transfer is served by the solicitor acting in the sale. The Council charges a fee of £100 (VAT free) to process it. If the property is mortgaged, the solicitor will also serve a Notice of Charge at the same time.

But it is not uncommon for the ownership of a property to change without the property being sold in the traditional sense. For instance, this can happen through a death, marriage, divorce or separation, with an owner's name being removed or added as a result. Or sometimes a property is inherited by completely new people.

When any of these scenarios happen, you are still legally required to serve a Notice of Transfer to the Council to formally update us of changes in the ownership of the property. If you transfer the ownership into a company name, you are also required to serve a Notice of Transfer. Note that we will not accept a Notice of Transfer unless the service charge account is fully paid up to date.

If you have changed your name, our records need to reflect the information that is held at the Land Registry. We can update your name on your lease free of charge, if you supply us with evidence that your name has been changed at the Land Registry (and with your mortgage provider, if you have a mortgage).

Even if you are just remortgaging with no changes to the ownership of the property, your solicitor is still required to serve a Notice of Charge upon the Council, for which there is also a fee of £100 (VAT free).

For more information, please email us at leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk or phone us at 01223-457835.

Your Neighbourhood Clean-Up events

Watch out for the Council's programme of Neighbourhood Clean-Up events. It rolls through our council estates across the year. Over a dozen have already happened this year.

They are very popular with residents. People find they are actually fun as well as being useful. It's a nice way to meet the neighbours, do some active things together, and enjoy a good clear-out. Your home and street can get an instant, free upgrade!

We will always deliver a leaflet to your door to let you know in advance before we hold one in your street or estate. The leaflet will let you know the date, time and full details.

For the event, we bring recycling bins and skips to help clear communal areas. Your own household can have a good clear-out too, bringing your household and garden waste to the bins and skips for free.



We can collect large items such as old sofas and washing machines. And if you cannot do it yourself we might even be able to help clear your garden. There's usually a popular Take It Or Leave It stall where locals can exchange unwanted items.

These clean-up events are usually organised by our Communities teams. And our Recycling Champions attend to answer any questions you may have about what you can recycle. But remember, never put any rubbish out in a public area before the event starts, or you could be prosecuted for flytipping.

Once the event starts, our staff will guide you for putting waste into the correct bins or skip, like at a recycling centre. For more information visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/neighbourhood-clean-up-events

Get rid of pests from your home

Do you have cockroaches, mice or rats affecting your home? The Council's experienced, qualified team provides a discreet and professional pest control service, costing £96.

Phone 01223-457000 and ask for Pest Control. If you receive certain benefits, it's free. For information, or to see the list of eligible benefits, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/pest-control-in-your-home

Who to contact for services

Register for your personal Housing Services account at www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts

When the phone number below is 01223-457000, please tell us the specific service you want.

To make council payments: Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk and click on Pay
Or tel: 01223-457000, with a bank card

Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage:
Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tenants
Tel: 01223-457000

Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours:
Tel: 03300-538-109 (same cost as a normal landline)

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

Contact the 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

Tel: 01223-457000

Housing for Older People and Visiting Support Service:

Email: independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457000

Home-Link lettings:

Visit www.home-link.org.uk

Tel: 01223-457000

Housing & Council Tax Benefits:

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457000

Bins, recycling, street-cleaning:

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-rubbish

Tel: 01223-457000

Bulky waste collection:

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

Leasehold services:

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders

Email: leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457835

Report anti-social behaviour:

Email: asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457000

Report tenancy fraud:

Email: fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk

Noise complaints

Email: env.health@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457000

Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline

Visit www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Tel: Freephone 0808-2000-247

Council emergencies out of hours

Tel: 0300-303-8389

To complain about council services:

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

Tel: 01223-457000

Council's contractors on estates

TSG Services:

Email: enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk

Tel: 01223-828777

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

Foster Property Maintenance:

Email: info@fpm-ltd.co.uk

Tel: 01945-586999

Goshen communal cleaning

Email: cs@goshenmultiservices.com

Tel: 0800-037-1958

Crystal Clear window cleaning

Tel: 01375-370800