

Partnership newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of our
partnership newsletter

Autumn 2025





Through these newsletters, we provide you, our partners and supporters, with news from within Cambridge Housing Society. As part of this, we also share updates on the support we receive and how organisations across Cambridgeshire can help us achieve our aim of creating opportunities that help people flourish.

In this edition, we share an update from our Mentoring Scheme, news of Landaid awarding us a grant to support our Mentoring Scheme, details of Fortem's Community Clean Up event, showcase Hill Group's Tech Tea Party event, give an overview into how you can help support us, as well as announce this year's Christmas Shoebox Appeal.

Read on to find out more...

Change a young person's life through our Mentoring Scheme

When we launched our [Social Impact Partnership](#) initiative earlier this year, one of our key objectives was to raise funds to establish a mentoring scheme for the young people living in our Supported Housing services. Working with mentoring specialists, Goal 17, we wanted to offer each of our young people a trusted mentor who would offer support and advice when it was needed. Thanks to grants and generous donations from Assura, Hopkins Homes and Landaid, we have raised the funding we need in just six months! As a result, we have already offered six young people in our community their own dedicated mentor.

Matching the right mentor to the right young person is the most important part of creating a successful partnership. Our partners, Goal 17, go the extra mile to try and make sure each young person gets the perfect partner! Although it's early days we wanted to share with you the story of Alex* and how having a mentor has opened up his world...

Alex, who had been displaced during the war in Ukraine, arrived in the UK when he was just 18 two years ago. No longer living with his father, Alex felt deeply isolated. Alex came to live at our supported housing service at Wheatsheaf Close in Ely, but struggled with speaking English. It was clear that Alex was struggling, and needed someone to connect with. When our Goal 17 Coordinator, Dani, first

reached out to Alex, he was reluctant to open up. But after some additional support and by communicating with him in his first language, it was clear how much of a barrier the English language was for Alex.

After initial discussions, Goal 17 reached out to their extensive network of mentor volunteers and connected with Anna*, a Ukrainian woman who had also recently moved to the UK who now works at Cambridge University. Understanding some of the challenges that Alex was facing, Anna agreed to become Alex's mentor. Her warmth, enthusiasm and sincerity were clear from the start, and the pair were matched as soon as possible. Their bond was instant, and it was clear that their shared origin and common language made a massive difference to Alex. Goal 17 continue to regularly check in with them both, and we're pleased to say that the feedback is overwhelmingly positive. Alex has expressed relief and excitement at finally being able to speak openly in his own language with someone who understands his journey.

Alex currently works on a building site but has aims of pursuing other opportunities. Anna is helping him to refine his CV and explore new possibilities. Socially, Alex is also beginning to thrive and make friends. These may seem like small feats to most, but they are huge for someone who is starting a new life in a new country at such a young age.



Speaking about her involvement in the Mentoring Scheme, Anna said:

*"I am honoured to join the Cambridge Housing Society Mentoring Scheme and happy to be matched with a Ukrainian mentee. Having myself been through the challenge of settling in a new country, finding a job and friends, I know how difficult it is. **I can't wait to see the positive impact from boosting Alex's self-confidence and self-motivation, as well as his belief in the ability to achieve goals.** Mentoring works both ways and the first contact with Alex also helped me recognise my own expertise and diminish feelings of self-doubt. I am excited to see where this journey will lead us and looking forward to celebrating every success, big or small".*



Mentoring is far more than just the matching of two people. This story highlights the difference that mentoring can have for both the mentor and the mentee, and we wish Alex and Anna all the best with their mentoring journey together.

To build on the success of our Mentoring Scheme, we are inviting businesses and organisations to sponsor their employees to become Volunteer Mentors. Our scheme provides mentors with accredited training and ongoing support, supervision and additional training delivered by Goal 17. Through their involvement, mentors develop a wide range of transferable skills, including enhanced confidence and communication, increased empathy, stronger leadership and coaching abilities. For businesses, the scheme offers a valuable opportunity to upskill staff, support employee development, and show commitment to social values. To find out more, read our [Mentoring Brochure](#), or contact kristina.cairns@chsgroup.org.uk

* Names have been changed



Fortem's Community Clean Up event

As part of our Social Impact Partnership Initiative, we have introduced Social Value pledges into our contracts, giving the organisations we work with the opportunity to engage positively in our communities.

As part of this pledge, our contractor, Fortem recently hosted a Community Clean Up event at our River Lane, Stephenson Court and Rowlinson Way communities in Cambridge. On the day, our staff and tenants teamed up with Fortem to remove unwanted household items as well as carrying out some litter picking in the surrounding area, with a skip provided by Reconomy to dispose of the waste completely free of charge.

Thank you to Fortem, Reconomy and to our tenant volunteers, Trish Laver and Louise Downham, for all of your help and support!

Our annual Christmas Shoebox Appeal

We are delighted to launch our seventh annual Cambridge Housing Society Christmas Shoebox Appeal! This appeal ensures that young people (16-25 years old) living in our supported housing services will have a gift to open this Christmas. For some of our residents, this is the only gift that they will receive at Christmas.

As with previous years, we are inviting business and organisations to donate a shoebox or gift bag filled with Christmas gifts, similar to what you might put into a stocking. Personal notes or messages from donors are welcome alongside your contributions, and as with previous years, we will distribute any surplus shoeboxes to other supported housing services and community groups across Cambridgeshire who also support people in need.

This year, our Appeal kicked off with staff volunteering events at AstraZeneca in Cambridge last month, with staff donating 80 gifts bags containing toiletries, sweets, biscuits, gloves, socks, games and craft materials. Previous corporate supporters have included RxCelera, PocDoc, Natwest, Barclays, Hill Group, HMB Cosmetics, Costello Medical, Arecor, Conscious Communications, St Faiths and Sawston Village College.



AstraZeneca volunteering staff event putting together Christmas gift bags.

Join the organisations helping us to make a difference through our appeal:



Our annual Christmas Shoebox Appeal

If your organisation would like to donate a shoebox, you should:

1. Wrap a box with Christmas paper or use a gift bag. Please do not wrap individual items
2. Fill it with a variety of different items from the suggestions list (see to the right)
3. Include a card and a message of hope (optional)
4. Gender neutral gifts are preferred but please label the box if gender specific, leaving the box/ gift bag unsealed
5. Drop the box off at any of our drop off locations no later than **Wednesday 17th December**



Suggestions list



Gift cards

Supermarket or coffee shops



New/unopened toiletries

Toothbrushes/paste, shampoo/ conditioner, deodorant, shower gel, hair gel, nail polish, shaving toiletries



Clothing

Hats, scarves, gloves, socks, pyjamas (medium)



Food

Chocolate/sweets, biscuits, selection boxes, savoury snacks



Stationary

Pens, notepads, colouring pens and pencils



Games

Board games, cards, puzzles

Strictly no alcohol, tobacco, cash, candles, jewellery or used/recycled items please

Our annual Christmas Shoebox Appeal continued

Donations can be dropped off at the following locations and times:



If you would like to find out more, please get in touch [0300 1113555](tel:03001113555) or email Kristina.Cairns@chsgroup.org.uk or Melanie.Johnson@chsgroup.org.uk



LandAid

CambsCuisine and Landaid's generous grants

Every grant we receive has the potential to be life-changing for someone in our community.

We are thrilled to share that Cambscuisine have awarded us a second £5000 grant this year via the Cambridgeshire Community Fund to our Employment Support Fund (ESF). ESF provides financial support to our supported housing residents, who see their housing benefit cut significantly when they begin working. With the help from Cambscuisine, our residents are not only helped into employment but are provided with support to allow them to sustain work long-term.

Our Mentoring Scheme is already working wonders for young people, and we're pleased to share that Landaid has kindly awarded us a £3,500 grant to fund it.

Every penny we receive really does make a difference. On behalf of everyone at Cambridge Housing Society, thank you.



Hill Group's Tech Tea Party

One of our aims through our Social Impact Partnerships initiative is to bring together the business sector and those living in our communities. Last month, Hill Group UK, hosted a Tech Tea Party for our older residents at our Housing with Care service at Richard Newcombe Court in Cambridge.

As part of this event, Hill Group's staff provided tea and cake to our tenants, while offering them advice on how to use their smartphone by accessing and sending emails, using social media, how to shop online, as well as how to stay safe online.

Thank you to Hill Group UK for your kindness and time, and thank you to Charlotte Marsh for organising this opportunity to support members of our community.

Could your organisation use its expertise to support our tenants and customers? Get in touch! We'd love to hear from you: kristina.cairns@chsgroup.org.uk



We've signed up to the Fundraising Regulator

At Cambridge Housing Society, we actively fundraise for our additional services so that we can support our communities. To demonstrate our commitment to transparency and accountability to all donors and funders, we signed up to the Fundraising Regulator earlier this year to ensure that our policies and procedures closely align with their code of conduct.



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

How you can support us

In the first year of our Social Impact Partnership initiative, we have selected four key campaigns that we would like to have support with. These campaigns are:



Our Employment Support Fund, which enables 16-25 year olds in our supported housing services to remain living in our service by providing financial support when their housing benefit is reduced as a result of employment.



Our Young People's Mentoring Scheme, which offers one-to-one mentoring to our young people to support them with both personal and professional development



Our WIN (When Its Needed) Fund, which provides financial and practical support to help level the playing field and give young people the same opportunities as their peers, including our Christmas Shoebox Appeal.



Our Nursery Bursary Fund, which provides residents at our Young Parent Project two days a week of childcare for children aged six months and over to ensure they don't miss out on early access to education and socialisation.

How to get involved



Volunteer

Offer practical support through volunteer opportunities (e.g. gardening, decorating, expertise)



Donate

Financial support or donated items



Spread the word

Raise awareness of our campaigns and the work we do within your networks, both locally and within your business community



Become a mentor

Either individually or through an employer sponsorship scheme



In kind contributions

Provide professional expertise



Lend your voice

Join us to lobby local and national governments for policy change to better support our mission

Get in touch by calling **0300 1113555** or email **Kristina.cairns@chsgroup.org.uk** or visit **www.chsgroup.org.uk/social-impact-partnerships/** to find out more