Shared Owners newsletter

July 2026

Welcome to the second edition of our CHS shared owners' newsletter.

In this newsletter, we provide our community of shared owners with news and updates, and answer some frequently asked questions. We are committed to continually improving the services for our shared owners by being transparent and providing information, support and guidance that you may find useful.

Read on to find out more…

CHS GROUP
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire

Understanding service charges: a shared ownership roadmap

Why do I pay service charges as a shared owner?

As a shared owner, you pay a fair proportion of the costs for services that benefit your home or the communal areas near your home. These services typically include:

- Buildings insurance
- Grounds maintenance
- Communal electricity
- Sinking/reserve funds
- Management company charges

Each year, your service charge is budgeted using the previous year's actual costs as a baseline. We aim to make these forecasts as accurate as possible so that your payments closely match the final invoices from our contractors. However, actual costs may fluctuate, increasing due to extra maintenance visits and contractor pricing, or decreasing if the required services or costs reduce.

Within six months of the end of the financial year end (31 March), your service charge account will be reconciled. We will write to inform you whether your total payments were higher or lower than the actual cost of services. We will then update your account to show a credit if you were overcharged, or a debit if the final costs were higher than expected.

If you have any queries about what your service charge covers, please contact us on 0300 111 3555 or by email info@chsgroup.org.uk.

As a shared owner, you have the legal right to review invoices and receipts for work completed that you have contributed to through your service charge. You can find further information on your rights here.

Sinking/reserve funds

Additionally, as part of your annual service charge, you may contribute to one or more sinking or reserve funds. These funds are allocated 'pots' for items which include further works, including but not limited to:

- Fences and gates
- Grounds maintenance
- Paths, roads and block paving
- Car parks
- Bike stores
- Walls and roof (flats)
- Internal or external decoration to communal areas

These 'pots' are built up over time to ensure funds are available for major repairs, minimising the need to ask leaseholders and shared owners for large lump-sum contributions. Each contribution is calculated based on the expected lifespan and replacement cost of the specific item.

If you have any questions or have any issue with service charge payments, please contact our Customer Service team on 0300 111 3555.

Annual Service Charge updates

If you need support with understanding the service charges that are revised every April, we have put together a useful diagram to explain how the cost breakdowns:

Statement of Anticipated Service Charge Expenditure

- **Positive** represents an increase
- **Negative (-)** represents a decrease

CHS Group
Statement of Anticipated Expenditure
1 Example Road
EXP001000

01 April 20XX - 31 March 20XX

The **Period** to which the costs relate

Annual Costs – the total estimated costs for your scheme during the period

Cost Heading	Administration Rate Applicable	Total Annual Costs (Shared Owners at Scheme)	New Monthly Charge	Current Monthly Charge	% Increase / % Decrease (-)	Cost Description
Communal Electricity	15%	£173	£7.21	£6.67		Electricity for communal areas
Door Entry Service and Callout	15%	£90	£3.75	£3.71		Service, callout and repairs to door entry systems
Fire Alarm Contract	15%	£791	£32.96	£32.96		Contracted regular servicing of fire alarm system
Management Co Man Fee	0%	£440	£12.22	£7.36		External management company management fees
Management Co Service Charge	7.5%	£760	£21.11	£21.78		External management company service charges
Property Insurance	15%	£684	£17.81	£18.57		Property building insurance cover
Sinking Fund - Bike Store	15%	£53	£2.21	£2.08		Provision for future work/replacement of the bike store
Sinking Fund - Bin Store	15%	£15	£0.62	£0.58		Provision for future work/replacement of the bin store
Sinking Fund - Cyclical Decs	15%	£407	£16.96	£16.25		Sinking Fund for decoration of communal areas
Sinking Fund - EICR Testing	15%	£12	£0.50	£0.50		Provision for cycle of electrical testing
Sinking Fund - Electric Wiring	15%	£15	£0.62	£0.58		Provision for future work/replacement of the electrical wiring
Sinking Fund - External Doors	15%	£93	£3.88	£3.71		Provision for future work/replacement of the external doors
Sinking Fund - Flooring	15%	£82	£3.42	£3.25		Provision for future work/replacement of the communal flooring
Sinking Fund - Hard Wire Test	15%	£55	£2.29	£2.17		Electrical testing in communal areas
Sinking Fund - Walls & Roof	15%	£311	£12.96	£12.42		Provision for future work/replacement of the roof
Sinking Fund - Windows	15%	£59	£2.46	£2.33		Provision for future work/replacement of the communal windows
TOTAL SCHEME COSTS		**£4,040**	**£140.98**	**£134.92**		
15% Administration Charge			£16.15	£15.87		Administration Charge applied to services provided
7.5% Administration Charge			£1.58	£1.63		Admin Charge for overseeing Management company services
MONTHLY SERVICE CHARGE TOTAL			**£158.71**	**£152.42**	**4.13%**	

Your new total **Monthly** service charge

Understanding your end of year statement

We have also created a diagram that explains the breakdowns of your end of year statement and how your service charge and adjustments have been calculated:

Service Charge Reconciliation Statement

This page explains how your Service Charge Balancing Adjustment has been calculated.

The figures on this page are examples to help you understand your statement and do not reflect your figures.

Your **Property Reference Code**

CHS Group
Service Charge Reconciliation Statement
1 Example Road
EXE001000

The total **Under / Overcharge (-)** adjusted for your period of ownership within the period occupied

The budgeted costs vs the actual costs:

-Positive represents expenditure above budget

-Negative represents expenditure below budget

Period Occupied: 01 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

Your Proportion of the Balance Due : £5.38

The related **Accounting Period**

01 April 2024 - 31 March 2025	Administration Rate Applicable	Total Annual Costs	Total Annual Charges	Your Actual Period Costs	Your Budgeted Period Charges	£ Under / £ Over (-) Charge	% Under / % Over (-) Charge	Cost Description
Management Co Service Charge	7.5%	£1,650	£1,500	£165.00	£150.00	£15.00		External management company service charges
Management Co Man Fee	0%	£500	£500	£50.00	£50.00	£0.00		External management company management fees
Communal Electricity	15%	£200	£200	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		Electricity for communal areas
Property Insurance	15%	£500	£600	£50.00	£60.00	-£10.00		Property building insurance cover
Sinking Fund - Car Park	15%	£600	£600	£60.00	£60.00	£0.00		Provision for future work/replacement of the car park
Gardening	15%	£500	£500	£50.00	£50.00	£0.00		Provision for future work/replacement of the communal fencing/gates
Total Scheme Costs		**£3,950**	**£3,900**	**£375.00**	**£370.00**	**£5.00**		
7.5% Admin Charge				£12.38	£11.25	£1.13		Administration charge applied to Management Co Service Charge
15% Admin Charge				£12.00	£12.75	-£0.75		Administration charge applied to services provided by CHS
Total				**£399.38**	**£394.00**	**£5.38**	**-1.00%**	

If these two figures are blank, the service exists on your scheme, however as you don't benefit, you are not charged

These figures relate to **all** shared ownership homes on your scheme

These figures relate to **your** home only

The total **Under / Overcharge (-)** for your unit

Why do I pay rent as a shared owner?

When a new shared ownership property is built, CHS purchases the home from the developer (or sometimes CHS builds the scheme) to sell a share to individuals who cannot afford to buy a home on the open market.

Rent is charged on the remaining, unowned share to contribute to the initial cost of the property to CHS, and to assist with funding future shared ownership and rented properties for those in need of affordable housing. This contribution will go towards paying interest on loans that CHS requires to buy properties from developers, Housing Officer support and our Customer Service team and colleagues who will be on hand to assist with any queries that you may have.

Housing associations are permitted to set an initial rent of up to 3% of the unowned property share, with the discretion to apply a lower rate. At the time of initial purchase, CHS charges a reduced rate of 2.75% of the unowned share.

In accordance with your lease agreement, your rent will undergo an annual adjustment every April. This increase is calculated using either the Retail Prices Index (RPI) plus 0.5%, or the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) plus 1%. Please review your specific lease agreement to confirm which calculation applies to your home or contact us directly for clarification.

Understanding the financial support available to you

For those living in our shared ownership homes, we recognise that the uncertainty of the conflict in the Middle East alongside the ongoing cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on household bills. For those who would like to find out more about accessing additional financial support, here is some advice and guidance on ways you can receive support.

At CHS, we are always here to help, should you need it.

As a shared owner, your housing costs consist of the following components, these include:

- The rental element
- A mortgage element
- Service charges

If you receive income-related benefits, you may be able to access financial assistance regarding the interest on your mortgage through the government's Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) scheme. SMI is a loan provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help with eligible mortgage interest payments. Unlike benefits, the loan is usually repaid when the property is sold or ownership is transferred. This is applicable if you receive:

- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Eligibility conditions apply to SMI and there is usually a waiting period before payments can begin. For more information visit the website.

Many of us may face a time when we need additional support during a period of financial difficulty but often assume that we do not qualify for assistance that could help. The Entitled To website is an easy-to-use calculator that can work out what support might be available to you.

To find out more, click here.

Last year, it was estimated that £24.1 billion worth of support was unclaimed by people it was intended to help, therefore while you may not want to apply for this support, or do not believe it to be applicable to you, we strongly encourage you to do so. All you need to do is provide details of the people living in your household, and your household income. So, when you have a quiet moment why not grab a cup of tea and put in your details? You may be very surprised by what you are entitled to.

Information for people receiving legacy benefits

Most people receiving legacy benefits should now have received a Migration Notice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which will inform you that you need to transition to claiming Universal Credit (UC) rather than means-tested benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), or Housing Benefit.

However, if you are still receiving means-tested benefits, it is important that you seek advice before transitioning to UC. If you make a voluntary claim for Universal Credit, your existing legacy benefits may stop, and you could lose entitlement to Transactional Protection that would traditionally be available through the managed migration process. If you are unsure about your personal situation, or have not received a notice from the DWP, please seek independent welfare advice before making any changes to your claim.

Help claiming Universal Credit (UC)

If you are a first-time claimant of Universal Credit (UC), Citizens Advice's 'Help to Claim' service is free and confidential. They can help you to:

- Check if you're entitled to Universal Credit
- Identify the paperwork and documents needed for your application
- Complete your application online
- Prepare for your first Jobcentre appointment
- Check your first payment is correct

Visit the website or call Citizens Advice Help to Claim on 0800 144 8444
The service is open from Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 6.00 pm

You can also talk to a trained advisor online through the Citizens Advice "Help to Claim" webchat service.

Accessing additional support, you may be eligible for

As a shared owner, you may also be entitled to a range of benefits and financial support schemes, depending on your individual circumstances.

Depending on your circumstances, you may also be entitled to:

Pension Credit – extra money to help with living costs for people over State Pension age on a low income.

Council Tax Reduction – help with Council Tax payments for households on a low income. You need to make an application to your local district council.

Healthy Start – support for pregnant women and families with young children receiving qualifying benefits.

Child Benefit – financial support for parents and guardians responsible for children.

Disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children, or Attendance Allowance.

Carer's Allowance – for people who spend a significant amount of time caring for someone with a disability or health condition.

Free school meals and help with school costs through your local authority.

Help with NHS health costs, including prescriptions, dental treatment and glasses, depending on your circumstances.

Foodbanks can help with short term needs – find your local foodbank here.

Baby banks provide a vital lifeline for families in all sorts of challenging circumstances and give families access to pre-loved equipment, products, clothes and toys. Find your local baby bank here.

The Cambridgeshire Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme offers fully funded activity places during Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. You can find more information here.

Moving on? Here's a guide on how to sell your shared ownership home

When the time comes to sell your share of your home, there are procedures that must be followed alongside required information to enable us to market your share for sale and find you a potential buyer.

Your lease agreement allows CHS eight weeks to find a buyer in need of affordable housing before you can advertise your share for sale with an estate agent on the open market. This is known as the 'nomination period'.

To enable us to advertise your share for sale we will need some information from you, this includes:

- An email or letter from you formally stating your intention to sell your share.
- A valuation of your home completed by a RICS certified valuer. You can find local valuers here.
- Good quality digital photographs of your home including one of the front of the property. Try to ensure that each room is photographed in a tidy and presentable state to show your home at its best.
- Your home's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). This can be found here. If your EPC has expired you will need to contact an assessor to complete a new assessment, you can find local assessors here.

Please note that we charge a 1% plus VAT (of your share value) fee which is payable upon completion of the sale.

We will advertise your share for sale on our website and at www.sharetobuy.com.

When a buyer registers interest in purchasing your share, we will email their contact details to you so that you can arrange a viewing. Once a buyer decides that they would like to proceed with purchasing your share, they will need to notify CHS, and they will then be asked to complete their shared ownership eligibility and affordability assessment.

Once the buyer is approved, solicitors will be instructed and your sale can proceed. The completion process typically takes three to four months from this point.

For further information, please see our Guide to Selling.

Working together to address Anti-Social Behaviour

At CHS, we want everyone to feel safe and comfortable in their homes and community. We recognise that occurrences of anti-social behaviour (ASB), and hate-related incidents can have a serious impact on people's wellbeing, which is why we are here to listen, support you and take appropriate action. Our ASB and Harassment Policy sets out our approach to tackling this behaviour and we offer the same support to everyone across our CHS communities

You can read more about our Anti-Social Behaviour & Harassment Policy here.

For your reference, ASB is defined as behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to others. This includes persistent loud noise, threatening or aggressive behaviour, verbal abuse, vandalism, and drug-alcohol related incidents. It can also include harassment or behaviour targeted at someone on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or religion. We take these incidents seriously as they harm not only individuals, but communities also.

Not everything that feels like a nuisance is classified as ASB. Everyday living noises like footsteps, closing doors, children playing, or occasional social events are normal household activities. Similarly, general disagreements or lifestyle differences between neighbours are not considered ASB unless there is clear evidence of harassment, intimidation, or repeated harm.

If you experience ASB, harassment, or hate-related behaviour, you can report it to us by phone, email, writing, or via our website. We respond to harassment and hate incidents within 24 hours (or the next working day). For all other reports, a Housing Officer will contact you within five working days. In serious situations, we may ask you to involve the police. They hold greater legal powers, and we work closely with them to determine the best course of action.

Our approach is always fair, proportionate, and focused on resolving the problem. For serious or persistent cases, we may take formal legal action. However, eviction is always a last resort, used only when other options have failed.

If you are experiencing ASB, please do not wait for things to get worse before getting in touch. Early reporting helps us understand the situation and respond more effectively. Once you report an issue, we will assess it and determine the best course of action.

If a further investigation is required, we will open a case managed by a dedicated Housing Officer, who will be your main point of contact. We will complete a risk assessment to understand how the situation affects your household and agree on a clear action plan. We also review any support, communication, or safeguarding needs you may have. Throughout the process, we will keep in regular contact and involve relevant partner agencies to help resolve the issue.

Your feedback matters - have your say

At CHS, we are committed to enhancing our services and communication channels, and we invite our shared owner communities to provide feedback on how we can better support you.

To help us determine our immediate priorities, please share your feedback on the following areas:

- **Service Charges and Communication:** Which of these areas requires our most urgent attention?
- **Responsiveness:** Do you feel your feedback is heard and that we respond to your enquiries in a timely manner?
- **Property Management:** Do you feel that your building or estate is being managed effectively?

How would you like to have your say?

We have outlined the following questions for your consideration:

Engagement Preferences

- How would you prefer to share your ideas? Please indicate if you prefer completing online surveys or participating in a dedicated online shared owners' forum.
- An online forum would feature presentations and discussions on key topics, including service charges, sinking funds, leasehold reform, lease extensions, and the maintenance of communal areas and grounds.

Digital Channels and Communication

- Which digital communication tools do you currently use to contact us?
- How would you rate your user experience with our website and portal?
- Do we provide sufficient information regarding the matters that are most important to you?

Service Scrutiny

- Would you be interested in participating in a more in-depth scrutiny of CHS services?

Estate Inspectors

Ensuring that all homes and communal areas are maintained to the highest standards is our top priority. This is why we currently have resident Estate Inspectors who work with our contractors to monitor communal areas, to check that no areas are neglected and that the work is completed to a good standard.

We are reaching out to our shared owners to ask whether they too would like to offer their support in maintaining your building, car park, or green space by answering a monthly survey. And if available, would you be interested in attending an estate walkabout alongside your Housing Officer to identify areas that require attention or improvement?

If you'd like to provide your feedback to the questions above and find out how you could get more involved, please contact:

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CHS GROUP
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire