



February Newsletter

A warm welcome to the February edition of our tenant newsletter. This month, you will find some important announcements from our contractors, how to correctly raise complaints and share feedback with us, and an exciting update from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)...

If you have any feedback on our new look newsletter, please get in touch on info@chsgroup.org.uk.



An update from our grounds maintenance team

We are pleased to say that our grounds maintenance work planned for the winter months is on track. A very small number of visits had to be rearranged as operatives were deployed to emergency works following recent storms, but these have all now been rescheduled.

Mark Walker Management has advised that CHS's preventative program of tree works has helped minimise the issues caused by the strong winds, compared to some of its other clients who have been hit hard with broken branches and fallen trees.



Foster 50 in 50 celebrations

Our repairs and maintenance contractor, Foster Property Maintenance, recently completed a project for us as part of its '50 in 50' community celebrations to mark the organisation's 50th anniversary.

Foster kindly delivered some upgrades to the garden at our young people's supported housing service, Wheatsheaf Close in Ely, which included installing a new garden seat and hedgehog house, replacing the cladding to the gazebo and a renovation to the garden bench.



Breege Brandon, Community Support Manager, commented:

"Thank you to Fosters and to Mark for putting us forward. Really appreciate it."

Tenant complaints

At CHS, we always aim to provide a high-quality service to all our tenants within the local community. However, sometimes things can go wrong and when this happens, we do all we can to put things right as quickly and as effectively as possible, with minimal disruption. If you are still unhappy with the service that has been provided, you are entitled to make a formal complaint. Ultimately, we learn from these complaints and your feedback as they help us to improve our services.

We have a number of ways we collect feedback, including:

- Call 2 Survey after a repair
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Face to face feedback
- Customer contact through our website
- Customer complaints panel

From your feedback in Quarter 3 2023 we found that:

- Of all people who made property-related complaints, 45% were dissatisfied with repair appointments and times and 61% were heating/plumbing problems
- 378 customers were contacted from Call 2 Survey after a repair, with 87% satisfaction

We prioritise listening to our tenants and are actively working with our repairs and maintenance contractor, Foster, to make improvements in our service to you.

**If you are not happy with CHS' service,
please get in touch.**

How our repairs maintenance contractor Foster is helping to improve complaint handling

Meet the team who look after complaints at Foster



Serena Verney – Head of Sustainability & Business Assurance

Serena first joined Foster in 2014, working within the Norwich operational office and then moving into a business development role. Having left Foster and worked for another company between 2017-2019, Serena has now been back in the Foster business for a further four years, as Head of Sustainability & Business Assurance. Serena's role includes helping ensure Foster's processes are followed, and that they meet client and resident expectations. This includes overseeing the complaints and feedback process and implementing improvements across contracts.



Jill Gamble – Resident Liaison Officer / Contract Coordinator

Jill has worked with Foster for many years, including on the CHS contracts. Jill has recently secured a new position with Foster as Contract Coordinator. This means Jill has greater involvement in the running of the CHS contracts as well as maintaining a high level of customer service and engagement. Jill is currently fulfilling the Resident Liaison Officer role while covering maternity leave, which means she remains a main point of contact for residents.

Complaints procedure updates from Foster

"As part of the review and improvement processes, our complaints procedures have been updated to include more resident communication and escalation options. Serena Verney, Head of Sustainability & Business Assurance is now included in the escalation process to enable feedback and complaints to be managed at a senior level, and if required, taken to the Board at Foster. Managers work closely with CHS and Serena to help ensure we address all feedback in a timely manner. We have also identified a trend in dissatisfaction in relation to the plumbing works undertaken on the repairs contract. As a result, we have created our operatives' skills matrix and implemented continued learning and development for our operatives to ensure they are all trained and experienced in dealing with relevant repairs. This matrix also allows our schedulers to assign the most competent person for the job. We have found this has already led to an improvement in resident satisfaction."

The link to the Foster complaints procedure is [found here](#).

What are we doing at CHS to improve the way we handle complaints?

- Through regular meetings, attended by our Property Services Performance and Quality (PQ) Team and Foster administration staff, we are contacting customers regarding follow up appointments and improving our communication with tenants.
- When looking at new complaints, especially leaks, we are highlighting these as risk properties for damp and mould.
- All performance data is fed back into our monthly contractor meetings, and the contractors are asked to comment on the feedback.
- If you are concerned about any disrepair or damp and mould, you can read our article on this topic in our **November newsletter** and we encourage you to get in touch with us.



Ways to raise a complaint with us

If you do ever feel like you need to make a complaint or want to speak to us about a contractor, you can do so in whichever way suits you best including:

- Call us on **0300 111 3555** or speak directly to a staff member
- Contact us **via our website**
- Email us **info@chsgroup.org.uk**
- Write to use at CHS Group, Endurance House, Chivers Way, Histon Cambridge CB24 9ZR

Or contact us on social media on **Twitter/X** or **Facebook** and we will discuss the issue with you privately via messaging

If your complaint is with our contractors, you can contact them directly

Foster

- Call **0330 1340150**
- Email **fostercentral@fpm-ltd.co.uk**
- WhatsApp **07377 989073**

Gasway

- **01603 309544**

Aaron Services

- **01473 835 175**



As a CHS resident, you can also contact The Housing Ombudsman for advice at any stage if your complaint is about housing. If your complaint is about our care provision, please contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Tel: **0300 061 0614** (Mon-Fri 10 am – 1pm, apart from Weds: 1 pm – 4pm) or write to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH. For the deaf users page, **[click here](#)**.

For more information on our complaints process, **[click here](#)**.



Customer engagement strategy: have your say

Listening to your views and using them to make changes, helps us to improve our services and give people opportunities to achieve what they want in life.

At CHS, there are many ways for you to share your thoughts and help us understand what matters most to you. As part of this commitment, we asked Tpas, a national tenant body that we are a member of, to carry out an independent review of how we engage with our customers to see which areas we need to strengthen. Tpas produced a report for us with its recommendations and we added to that by asking our customers what they think – thank you if you responded to our surveys.

We know from our latest survey that almost all tenants want to have a say and that you want to choose how to do it. This has led to our new Customer Engagement Strategy, in which we want to provide a variety of ways tenants can influence CHS that suit everyone.



Be informed

We will keep you informed with monthly newsletters, the Annual Report, and by keeping our website and myCHS portal up-to-date. We want to empower all of our staff to be able to answer customer queries with access to up to date information.

Provide feedback

We will have a clear complaints process and maintain our improved complaint handling times. We will survey you to monitor our performance and get your views on those issues which are of interest to you. You can provide feedback to us at any time and in any way you choose – call us, via our website, via email or in person. We will also improve how we let you know what difference your feedback makes.

Contribute to discussions

We want to encourage all our tenants to join conversations about the services you receive, such as repairs and grounds maintenance, this might be through surveys or occasional focus groups, or as an Estate Inspector. If we're reviewing a policy, we'll ask those of you affected by it what you think.

Collaborate with working groups

We have volunteer tenants who collaborate with us to improve services. If this is something you might be interested in, you can join us for just one meeting and see what you think. The groups include:

- The Tenant Scrutiny Panel carries out in-depth investigations of CHS services to see if the service is working well by looking at evidence and speaking to tenants and then makes recommendations for improvements.
- The Customer Complaints Panel monitors CHS's complaint handling performance, and if requested, they can review your complaint at stage two. If they decide to uphold it, they may recommend a solution and compensation.
- Contractor core groups invite tenants to sit on groups that monitor our contractors' performance to check that contracts are being followed and delivering value for money.
- The Tenant Committee leads on amplifying Tenant Voice. We would love more tenants to come and hear our plans for the future, comment on policies and strategies and hold us to account.

If you would like to find out more about how you can have your say, please email our customer involvement officer Laura Papanikolaou (lpap@chsgroup.org.uk), or call her on 07540 122624.

Regulator of Social Housing upgrades CHS Group's rating

Finally, we leave you with the exciting news that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in the UK has upgraded its rating of our organisation.

The RSH assesses housing association providers every three to five years and rates organisations on governance (G) and financial viability (V), and undertakes annual stability checks. The regulatory judgement, published on 17 January 2024, has regraded CHS's financial viability from V2 to V1, which means that our organisation meets the regulator's viability requirements and has the financial capacity to deal with a wide range of adverse scenarios. The judgement also confirms CHS's existing G1 grade for governance.

Our Chief Executive, Stephen Hills, said: "We understand that it is rare for the RSH to upgrade providers, so we're thrilled to be rated with the highest grading in both governance and financial viability, in recognition of our well-governed and financially stable organisation, particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis and economic uncertainty."

"The Regulator positively comments on our commitment to the community in which we operate, from our support services to extra care provision. We are governed by a Board, drawn from the local community, which sets our direction and monitors progress towards our goals. Our recent strategy, to focus our efforts on the core offering of social housing and services for people in need in our community, has largely influenced the high financial viability rating."



For more help and guidance, to check your rent account and raise repairs, don't forget to log into **myCHS.**

We'd also love to hear your thoughts on our new newsletter. To get in touch, email: **info@chsgroup.org.uk.**

