

CHS



Cambridge Housing Society

A BRIEF HISTORY

1927

1930

1935

1940



CHS Group is a
social enterprise
and charitable
housing association

2017

CHS Group is a social enterprise and charitable housing association, helping people and communities to overcome challenges, take opportunities, and develop their ability to achieve their aspirations. CHS (The Cambridge Housing Society Limited) was founded in 1927 and this history looks back at our past 90 years.

2017 was a landmark year for CHS and we're extremely proud and privileged to have celebrated it alongside our staff and residents. We have experienced many changes over the last 90 years and still continue to evolve, adapt and innovate to support some of the most vulnerable people in our region.

CHS celebrated its 90th anniversary across our many homes and projects by launching our 'Project 90' campaign. This saw every area of the business working towards a goal associated with the number 90 to ensure everyone was involved in the celebration. Amongst other things, our Development team planted 90 trees, our Community Investment team helped 90 people into work or training, and staff cycled the 90 miles to visit each one of our 12 residents who also turned 90 in 2017. The year culminated in a celebratory event with our staff and residents. We have also commissioned research, in collaboration with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and The Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research into affordability in Cambridge and how best we can respond in the future.

CHS is about creating better opportunities for our customers. We try to do this by providing high quality, good value homes and services that we'd be happy for our families and friends to use. None of this would be possible without our dedicated and motivated team of employees. Everyone here believes that the way a service is carried out is as important as the actual service itself and we're proud that our staff feel that we are one of the top organisations to work for, evidenced by our continuous improving ranking in the Sunday Times Best Companies list.



Our first homes at Green End Road, built 1927

1920's

Barnabas Shipp, after whom we named Barnabas Court, our sheltered housing scheme at Milton, celebrating his 100th birthday in 1971



Children of the first tenants at Green End Road



CHS has always had not only the housing needs of its tenants in mind but also their quality of life.



‘Homes fit to live in, within the reach of the lowest wage earner’ was the rallying call of the members of the United Council of Christian Witness who were appalled at the squalid living conditions of the poorest families in Cambridge after the First World War. Throughout its lifetime, CHS has sought to live up to this aim.

Our founders:



Alex Wood, in his role first as Treasurer and later as Chair, had a large influence on CHS. He was a committed Christian, a Labour councillor and a university professor. He was chair of the Town Council Housing Committee and was very influential in the formation and running of CHS.

Alderman John Conder, Mayor of Cambridge, was an enthusiastic supporter of the foundation of CHS and was Chair for its first eleven years.

The first Secretary of the organisation was **Dorothy Stephenson** another Town Councillor.

Clara Rackham was the first woman Labour councillor on Cambridge Town Council. She was active in the women's suffrage, co-operative, peace, adult education, and labour movements.

Other members were Ebenezer Cunningham, H C Carter, L Mellish Clark, A Cross, S French, Bertha Johnson, Rose Matthews, A S Ramsey, R M Rootham, George Stephen and C Dampier Whetham.

The first land, financed with gifts of £2,500, 2.5% loan stock of £2,000 and a £6,000 loan from the Town Council, was bought at Green End Road and 22 homes were built. The development was completed in October 1927 and 22 families, with their 91 children, moved in. Another 39 homes were added shortly afterwards in other parts of Cambridge.

From the beginning, CHS ran a ‘move on’ scheme with the Council, to make the best use of the available homes. This ensured that any tenants whose income had increased enough to be able to afford council rents were rehoused by the Council so that their CHS home could be re-let to someone else in need.

Council rents were out of reach of the poorest families and CHS rents were therefore heavily subsidised. For each dependent child 6d (2.5p) per week was deducted from the 7s/6d rent, down to a minimum of 5s.



In 1935, CHS was a founder member of the Federation of Housing Societies (now the National Housing Federation).

Houses at Ditton Walk 1960

1930's, 40's, 50's

By the end of the 1930's, CHS had completed 61 homes in Green End Road, Montreal Square, Hobart Road and French's Road. CHS then turned its attention to young married couples who were having to live in overcrowded conditions with their parents because the council could not house them and they were unable to find suitable rented accommodation. 18 houses were completed in Ditton Walk. A further 9 homes were later added to the scheme after a flood of applications.

Affordability has always been a top priority and in 1935 rent subsidies increased, pushing some residents' rent below 2s per week.

The Second World War halted development and CHS began the first of its community investment services by providing potato seed and 5 shilling vouchers to buy other vegetable seeds, tools and fertiliser to its residents. Residents could also purchase paint for redecorating at wholesale prices or at half price to residents out of work. Residents were encouraged to pay any extra money they could into their rent accounts, as a way of 'saving for a rainy day'.

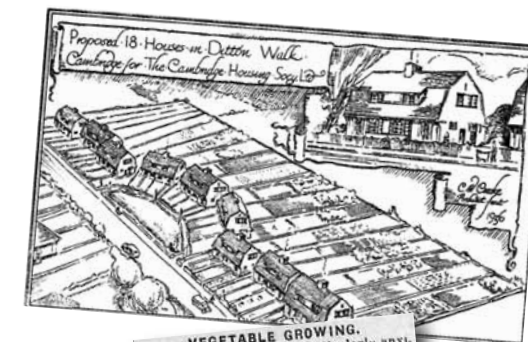
In 1942, CHS took over the Corona Building Association and its 12 one bed flats. Land for 8 houses was purchased at Netherhall Way, Cherry Hinton to attract key workers for the Cambridge University Press.

In the 1950's Dr Alex Wood died and was succeeded as Chair by Dr Peter Maitland, a chemistry don who had joined the CHS committee in 1929.

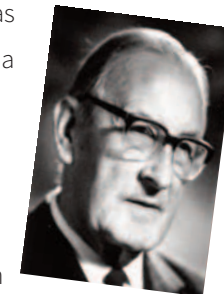
In the early fifties, CHS responded to the housing needs of older people when the Old People's Welfare Council requested us to build a residential care home.

An appeal for £10,000 to help build the £50,000 Langdon House was made at a public meeting on 19 January 1953 and CHS re-mortgaged 27 of its existing homes. HRH Princess Margaret opened the home in 1957.

CHS adopted charitable status in 1952.



VEGETABLE GROWING.
"We have always been particularly anxious to encourage our tenants to make the fullest use of gardens for growing vegetables, and last summer we granted to all of them 5/- vouchers for vegetable seeds, tools or fertiliser as well as our usual gift of seed potatoes. This measure was much appreciated by the tenants, and as a result particularly good crops of vegetables were grown."
"The Society has also started a distemper scheme. Many of our tenants spoil their rooms by using inferior distemper of unsuitable colours for re-decorating. The





The housing needs of single people were recognised with an innovative scheme at Campkin Court in 1966

1960's, 70's

Extra wings were added to Langdon House - the Elsie Blackman Wing, named after the first Chair of the Langdon House Committee, provided accommodation for those needing higher levels of care. Oban Court, adjacent to Langdon House, was opened in 1964 by Housing Minister Richard Crossman and was the first of many CHS sheltered housing schemes. This was an early example of an integrated housing scheme providing a wide range of care and support services for older people on one site.

By the sixties the housing needs of single people were recognised and in an innovative scheme at Campkin Court in 1966, CHS provided self-contained accommodation for 35-55 year old business and professional women.

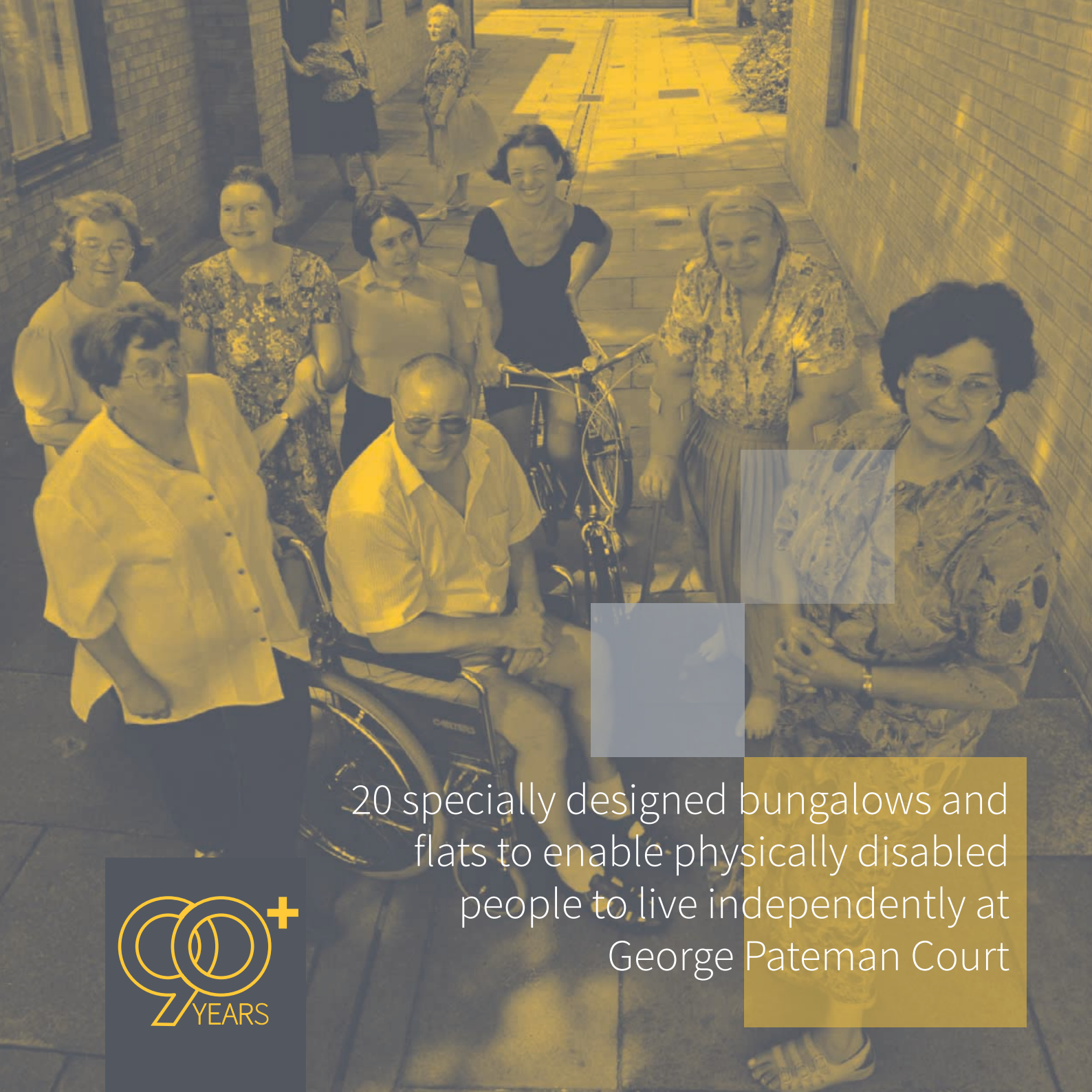
in 1970, our second sheltered accommodation scheme was built at Crossways Garden, Trumpington.

In the 60's and 70's all CHS's pre-war homes were modernised and fitted with central heating and blocks of garages were provided on three estates. The property at Castle Row was improved and let to the Castle Project for people recovering from psychiatric illness.

From 1974 onwards the Housing Corporation developed as the central controlling and funding organisation for housing associations.

By the end of the decade, CHS owned 315 properties.





1980's

Lawrence Negus became Chair in 1982.

CHS has been at the forefront of providing homes for vulnerable people with support needs in Cambridgeshire since 1974 when Government grant became available. 20 specially designed bungalows and flats to enable physically disabled people to live independently were part of CHS's first grant funded scheme at George Pateman Court, opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1981.

Danesbury Court was built to house young single people, couples and older people in 1980 and our Russell Street project broke new ground in housing adults with learning disabilities in a joint shared living scheme with people without learning disabilities. Russell Street won the National Housing Federation's Golden Jubilee award in 1985. With changing needs it now caters only for people with learning disabilities, both at the scheme and in the community.

Our Railway House scheme for vulnerable young people was converted from 5 railway cottages on Mill Road and we also converted Corona House into a hostel for homeless women. Corona House was replaced in 2011 with self-contained flats and also provides outreach community support.

With encouragement from district councils, social services and health authorities, CHS became a main provider of accommodation offering full care and support to older residents and we now have three residential care homes at Langdon House and Alex Wood House in Cambridge and Vera James House in Ely. Ellis House and St Andrew's Glebe sheltered schemes opened in 1987 and Bedford House in Ely was transformed into Vera James House, accommodation for over 55's at John Beckett Court and a day centre for older people, opened by HRH Duchess of Kent in 1989.

During the 80's, CHS began responding to the needs of families living in rural areas where property prices had spiralled out of reach, by building affordable homes on land provided by district and parish councils for renting by local people, the first in 1986 at Blenheim Close, Shepreth.



20 specially designed bungalows and flats to enable physically disabled people to live independently at George Pateman Court





Richard Newcombe

1990's

In 1990, David Gardiner became Chair and Richard Newcombe was appointed Chief Executive. CHS developed the Cambridge Women's Aid Refuge and fundraising activities were directed at helping to fund the building of Peter Maitland Court, providing affordable homes, a hostel for single parents and their babies, and Sunflower Nursery. The nursery offers bursary places to the children of low income families so their parents can access education or to enable them to work, and was opened by Glenda Jackson MP in 1991.

CHS has always believed that housing is a means to an end, not an end in itself, and in 1997, the New Horizons saving and loan scheme was established in conjunction with the Cambridge Building Society, to enable residents to borrow money at low rates of interest as a lack of reasonable credit facilities was a major obstacle for people trying to improve their opportunities. Now, CHS's award winning Community Investment team concentrates on ensuring that all social housing residents are able to access our lifelong learning, money advice and digital inclusion services.

Our rural housing scheme work continued in Fenland, in Guyhirn, Wisbech St Mary and Manea; and our 1,000th home, at Kathleen Elliot Way Cambridge, was completed in 1995 and was for families, just like our first home back in 1927. In 1996, our Ely Young People's Support Service,

offering support and accommodation to young people at risk of homelessness, was completed and the following year we developed An Lac House for elderly Vietnamese People, in conjunction with the Abbeyfield Cambridgeshire Vietnamese Society. Land was also purchased to build Barnabas Court in Milton, the third of our sheltered housing schemes.

Marie Thompson was appointed Chair in 1999.



Bedford house, Ely



Glenda Jackson at Sunflower Nursery

Blessing of An Lac House





21st Century

Nigel Howlett became Chief Executive in 2000 and Chair Nicola Scrivings has followed Alan Maltpress MBE and Sheila Forrest in moving the organisation on, both physically, into our offices at Endurance House, Histon, from cramped space in the grounds of Alex Wood House in Fortescue Road, and into exciting new areas, whilst still maintaining our ethos.

Cambridge was identified as an area for significant housing growth, and in response, CHS made a step change, and increased our rate of building towards 300 new homes each year, including our 2000th home in Papworth, a shared ownership home. We completed our first homes at the new community of Cambourne in 2002 and our 2,500th home was completed at Hudson Way, Cambourne in 2010; again, like our first home in 1927, a family home. Our sustainable water management scheme at Cambourne, designed to showcase flood management, was commended at the Royal Town Planning Institute awards.

We created Cambridge and County Developments (CandCD) in 2009 to add value to CHS's social objectives through generating profits from developing homes for open market sale. Profits generated are reinvested into the business and ultimately gift-aided to CHS to further our charitable objectives.

Sustainability has become an essential part of our lives and we remain committed to producing homes with high standards of space, energy efficiency measures and thoughtful design. Our first homes to be fitted with solar panels were completed in 2001 at Blackberry Way and Wagstaff Close in Cambridge. In 2007 we completed our first scheme with ground source heat pumps at Wicken, and our first air source heat pumps at two developments in Wisbech in 2009. We also retrofitted a home at Adelaide Waters Almshouses to inform research into the best way of achieving energy saving in existing buildings.

In 2008, our residents at Moorlands residential care home, Melbourn, moved into new Extra Care accommodation at Moorlands Court and Extra Care facilities were also provided at Dunstan Court and at our latest older people's scheme at Richard Newcombe Court, which is a carbon neutral scheme and was shortlisted for the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' award for Design and Innovation and Community Benefit and was Sustain' Magazine's Development of the Year in 2012.

We have now developed domiciliary care services from Moorlands Court, Dunstan Court and Richard Newcombe Court, delivering care, housekeeping services and meals to older people in the community.

2,500th home at Cambourne



Richard Newcombe Court

Our first floating support service, offering support to people in South Cambridgeshire in their own homes, was launched in 2006. In 2010 this service moved to Bedford House in Ely, offering support to people in East Cambridgeshire. From 2012, we extended our residential support services to young people in Fenland, and to Looked After Children in both Fenland and Cambridge.

CHS's first nursery in Cambridge gained a sister nursery in Cambourne in 2008 and both nurseries promote intergenerational work by regularly visiting older people's schemes. In 2017, in response to trying to make our assets work harder, we launched an intergenerational living scheme at Ellis House, one of our sheltered housing schemes, with postgraduate students living at the scheme for reduced rents in exchange for volunteer work with the older residents.

Our Community Investment services go from strength to strength, with the launch of Timebanking, in partnership with Cambridge County Council, with an event in 2011 featuring Edgar Cahn, founder of Timebanking and the formation of timebanks in Cambourne and Littleport & Ely. Timebanks provide a way for local people to come together to help others and help themselves at the same time. Participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical help and support to others and are able to 'withdraw' their time when they need something done



themselves. We have also introduced Time Credits, where giving of time earns credits that can be spent on family days out or recreation. In 2019 the Big Lottery Fund awarded us £50,000 to continue expanding Timebanking in Cambridgeshire.

Our New Horizons project is part of the Building Better Opportunities programme funded by the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund and helps people tackle money problems, get online and get closer to finding paid work.



Educational support for Adult Literacy programmes

CHS and our partners were also chosen to run the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme which provides information, advice and one-off practical support and assistance in times of exceptional pressure.

Affordability remains our key priority. We made the decision not to access grant funding from 2011 as this would have led to us having to convert existing homes at social rent to 'Affordable' Rent. Welfare Reform presents real challenges for our residents and we continue to work hard to both support our residents to manage these difficulties and to lobby Government for changes to Welfare Reform and to Supported Housing funding. Recently changes have been made to grant funding for development, and whilst we aim to always provide homes for social rent, we now also provide homes at Local Housing Allowance level rent. The new devolution deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough also promises to give a significant boost in terms of affordable housing and our business plan aims to deliver 600 new affordable homes over the next 5 years.

Over the years, much of what CHS has achieved would not have been possible without our commitment to partnership working, and we thank those organisations and people without whom Cambridgeshire would not be the thriving community it has become, and we look forward to our continuing collaboration in the future.

- Our values:**
- Respect** – We see people as people and treat everyone with fairness, respect and dignity
 - Approach** – We put as much emphasis on the way we do things, as on what we do
 - Partnership** – We work hard to develop open communication and equal relationships with our customers, staff and partners which value their contributions and enable us to work together effectively
 - Openness** – We are open, positive and flexible towards both new ideas and problems, and we encourage innovations and creativity that improves the outcomes from our services
 - Deliver** – We do what we say we will do and hold ourselves accountable for our actions.



A new development of Affordable Homes at Littleport, 2018.



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