



CHELtenham
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing services

Welcome to your new home

Your tenant handbook

Your go to guide for the key things you need to know about your home

Contents

Use the contents below to find sections in this handbook

Moving in.....	3
My tenancy reference number is:	3
Keep an eye on your keys	3
Setting up your utilities	4
Did you know?	4
Paying your rent.....	4
Direct Debit.....	4
Pay Online.....	4
Standing Orders	4
Pay by phone	4
Supporting you.....	5
Extra help when you need it	5
Your tenancy	5
Disposal of goods policy	8
How to report a repair	9
Gas enquiry	10
Keeping you safe:.....	10
Looking after your home:.....	10
Have your say	12
Feedback and complaints	13
Getting in touch with us.....	13
Anti-social behaviour (ASB).....	13
Domestic abuse	14
Need extra support?	14

Moving in

Welcome to your new home. We hope you enjoy living here and feel safe, comfortable, and supported throughout your tenancy.

This handbook outlines important information about your tenancy responsibilities, how to look after your home and how to contact us if you need help or repairs.

Our aim is to provide you with a high-quality housing service, and we encourage you to get in touch if you need advice or support at any time.

Now that you have the keys to your new home, you can get in touch with key organisations to set up your accounts for:

- Gas
- Electric
- Water
- Council tax
- Internet or phone
- TV licence

We recommend making a note of your tenancy reference number. This is used in many of our letters to you and it is needed for rent payments.

My tenancy reference number is:

Keep an eye on your keys

We don't keep master keys and lock changes are expensive. If you lose your keys, you will be recharged for a lock change.

Setting up your utilities

It's important for you to take the necessary meter readings for your gas and electric. That way you only pay for what you use.

If you have gas central heating or a gas fire, the system has to be uncapped by our property services team.

You can get in touch with the team on **0800 408 0000** to arrange an appointment.

Did you know?

You need at least £5 credit for pre-payment meters, on both your gas and electric meter card.

Paying your rent

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to pay your rent. There is a wide choice of methods available:

Direct Debit

The easiest and best way to pay is by either weekly, or monthly direct debit. We will give you advance notice of the collection amounts and date. To apply, please contact your income officer on **0800 408 0000**

Pay Online

Make your payment online through the online portal at portal.cbh.org or you can pay via the council's secure rent page at cheltenham.gov.uk/rent-payment

Standing Orders

Arrange to have your rent paid directly from your bank or building society account.

Pay by phone

You can now pay your rent 24 hours a day via our automated payment line. Please call **0800 408 0000** and **remember to have your debit card and your personal telephone payment number, you can log it below:**

If you are struggling to pay your rent please contact your income officer as soon as possible.

Home contents Insurance: the council's insurance covers the building you live in but not your own belongings (furniture, carpets, curtains, personal items) and it will not cover the internal decoration of your home if there is a fire. We strongly advise you to take out home contents insurance. The council have a home contents insurance scheme, for more information please call the customer service team on 0800 408 0000

Supporting you

If you're worried about being able to pay your rent, or have fallen behind with your payments, contact our income team as soon as possible. The team are on hand to provide advice on affordable payments and any benefits you may be entitled to receive.

Contact our housing revenues team on 0800 408 0000 or email income.team@cheltenham.gov.uk

Extra help when you need it

We also provide free and confidential advice on all welfare benefits and day to day money management. If you are struggling to afford your rent or manage your bills, we can suggest simple budgeting tips, energy advice and can carry out a benefit check-up. You can contact the benefit and money advice team on **0800 408 0000** or email bma@cheltenham.gov.uk

Your tenancy

An introductory tenancy: If you have not been a council or housing association tenant before (and haven't been one in the past 12 months), you will start with an introductory tenancy. The introductory tenancy usually lasts for 12 months and if there are no issues during this time, the tenancy automatically becomes secure. If there are serious issues, we can look to extend the introductory tenancy or in extreme cases, take steps to end the tenancy.

A secure tenancy: Most of our tenants have a secure tenancy, this means that as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy, you have a legal right to stay in your home. You will find these conditions in your tenancy agreement. If you break the terms of your agreement we may need to take legal action to end your tenancy.

A non-secure tenancy: This type of tenancy is for people who are in temporary furnished accommodation while the council assesses their rehousing needs or for those who have been offered accommodation through the homeless legislation but do not qualify through the housing register. The council can end this tenancy at any

time. These conditions are in your tenancy agreement. Non secure tenants may be offered an introductory tenancy with the council or a housing association if circumstances change.

A fixed term tenancy: fixed term tenancies will be given to tenants who occupy properties that are leased by CBC from a third party who own the freehold of the building.

Fixed term tenancies are granted by the council for a period of five years.

Passing on your tenancy (succession): A tenancy can only be handed down once, this is called a 'succession'. In the event of your death, it can be passed to your spouse, son, daughter or joint tenant. If you have inherited a tenancy, you will not be able to pass it on. In some circumstances a partner or other close relative may succeed to your tenancy even if you are not joint tenants. They must be over 16 years of age and have lived in your home continuously for at least 12 months before they can succeed your tenancy. This is a complex legal area so please contact your tenancy management officer for further information and support.

Giving your tenancy to someone else: If you no longer wish to live in your home, you may be able to pass your tenancy onto someone else (as long as you are the original tenant). A deed of assignment is needed, we may be able to help with this. If your home is not suitable for the person receiving your tenancy, we may offer them the tenancy of another home. This can happen if there are too many bedrooms, if the home is too large or if you live in sheltered accommodation.

Lodgers and sub-letting: If you have a spare room in your house and would like to have a lodger, you can do this without our permission. If you are getting housing benefit you must tell the housing benefit office as taking in a lodger could affect the amount of benefit you receive. You may be able to sublet part of your home but you need our permission to do this, you cannot sublet your entire home.

If your marriage or relationship ends: If your relationship ends, you and your partner have certain rights to your home. Both of you need to decide what will happen to your tenancy.

The law is quite complex, and it is important you both get independent advice about what your rights may be. A solicitor or citizens advice bureau can help you.

Ending your tenancy: If you decide to end your tenancy, you must give us at least four week's notice in writing.

We will need to know:

- The date you will be leaving
- Your forwarding address
- A contact telephone number

Before you leave, you must:

- Leave your home and garden clean and tidy
- Make the property safe and secure
- Take all your contents, carpets, curtains and furniture
- Leave any fittings that belong to us

Your tenancy will officially end at midnight on Sunday, 4 weeks after we receive written notice. You will need to hand your keys into our area offices by midday on Monday, if you fail to do this we will have to charge you extra rent which is unlikely to be covered by any housing benefits claim.

You will be charged for any damage to the property that has been done during your tenancy.

If you have household items you no longer need, please call 01242 262626 to get these items picked up, there will be a charge for this.

If you leave any items in the property, we will dispose of them and you will be charged for this, please remember it is an offence to fly tip and you could be prosecuted.

Please make sure your rent account is clear when you end the tenancy, if you owe rent please contact your income officer. In most circumstances you will not be able to have another tenancy with us if there is debt on your account from previous tenancies.

If you go into a nursing home or the tenancy ends because of a death, all above will apply but:

- Your next of kin or executor will need to tell us in writing
- If the keys are handed in early and the property is let during the 4 week notice period we will end the tenancy as soon as the property is let
- Your entitlement to housing benefit will end the Sunday following a death and the full weekly rent will be due from that date
- Any debt outstanding from the notice period will be a debt against the estate and not the personal liability of the next of kin or executor.
- If the property is returned to us clear and clean from damage, 2 weeks rent will be credited to the account, the next of kin or executor will need to return the keys to the area office once they have cleared the property.

Swapping your home: You can apply to mutually exchange if you hold a secure or assured tenancy with CBC or another social landlord such as a housing association.

You can register for FREE at [homeswapper.co.uk](https://www.homeswapper.co.uk) to view properties in Cheltenham or another area of the UK. This gives you the widest choice of properties with CBC and other social landlords.

If you find a tenant who wants to move into your property and you would like to move into theirs, both parties need to complete a Mutual Exchange Application Form and wait for our approval. You must not swap homes without the approval of both Landlords.

Call 0800 408 0000 for more advice or to request a form. All forms are available in our area offices and on the website.

Keeping pets in your home: You are welcome to keep a pet or pets in your home. There are no restrictions as to how many pets you can have, but they must be housed and looked after properly and not cause any nuisance to your neighbours, visitors or in the community. They must also not cause any damage to your home or the communal areas. If you have a dog, you must keep it under control at all times, including when it is outside. You must not allow your dog to foul in internal communal spaces. Any mess in the external communal spaces must be picked up and disposed of appropriately. If you do not look after your pets properly and they become a nuisance, we may take legal action against you and your tenancy.

Your tenancy management officer:

We have a team of tenancy management officers (TMOs) on hand to offer you advice and support to manage your tenancy.

This support covers:

- Day to day housing enquiries
- Advice on your tenancy
- How to report problems

If your TMO is unable to help you directly, they will connect you with the right team or external agency to make sure you get the help you need.

Your local tenancy management officer will contact you within the first four weeks of you moving in. They will then carry out a tenancy audit every five years as a minimum to make sure your details, such as who's living in your home and your contact information is up to date.

You can contact the team on 0800 408 0000 or email:

tenancy.management.team@cheltenham.gov.uk

If you have any concerns about anti-social behaviour, your local anti-social behaviour (ASB) officer is here to help and can advise on next steps. To get in touch with the ASB team contact 0800 408 0000 or email asb@cheltenham.gov.uk

Disposal of goods policy

As your landlord, we have responsibilities to keep communal areas within our properties in a safe condition. This includes removal of any items that could cause a fire risk or is a trip hazard to anyone trying to leave the building in an emergency

situation. You should not keep any of your possessions in communal areas, this includes e-bikes and mobility scooters.

If you or your neighbours leave items within communal areas, we will work with you to remove them within a reasonable time period. If you or your neighbours refuse to remove items, you could be charged for the costs to clear and store your belongings until you collect them or we dispose of them.

How to report a repair

Our property services team provides a comprehensive repairs service.

Repairs are completed within set timescales, depending on how urgent they are.

We've included examples of how we prioritise repairs below:

- **Emergency (24 hour response):** Emergency repairs are a danger to life or property and can include but not exclusive to: burst pipes, unsafe power, a water leak through a ceiling, a front door that is insecure, smashed glass in a window.
- **Urgent (5 working days response):** Repairing a toilet not flushing in your home if there is only one, unblocking a kitchen sink or hand basin.
- **Routine (15 working days response):** Dripping taps, minor repairs to walls, woodwork, guttering, floors, brickwork, fences, kitchens and bathrooms (etc.).

Visit our online portal at portal.cbh.org for details on how you can report non-urgent repairs online.

If it's urgent, please call us on 0800 408 0000, this telephone number is manned 24/7

All staff and contractors will carry identification, you should ask to see this before allowing them in your home

You must allow access to your home and we will give you reasonable notice if we need to come into your home. We may need access to inspect, repair or improve your home or a neighbouring home.

In an emergency we may need to enter your home without giving you notice, in these instances we will gain access in the most appropriate way. An emergency will be a situation that could injure people or damage your home or neighbouring home.

All tenants have a 'right to repair'. You can find more information on this in our repairs policy at: cheltenham.gov.uk/housing-repairs

Gas enquiry

We have a legal obligation to service and check the safety of all gas appliances every year and your co-operation is requested in providing access for the engineers.

If you intend to install or have any work done to gas appliances please ensure you use a CORGI registered gas fitter.

If you have a domestic gas enquiry, please visit myportal.phjones.com – you will need your reference from the PH Jones servicing letter and your postcode.

You can find more information on Cheltenham Borough Council housing services annual gas servicing at cheltenham.gov.uk

Smell Gas? Immediately call National Grid on 0800 111 999 (freephone) or follow the **National Grid website** at nationalgrid.co.uk

Getting your heating and water back on: If ever your gas supply is turned off by the National Grid and you have no heating or hot water, then call PH Jones for an urgent call-out they will attend as soon as possible within 24 hours.

Keeping you safe:

Your wellbeing is our top priority. If you need a repair, which includes concerns about damp and mould, please contact us immediately and we will assess the situation and assign it a level of priority.

We take reports of damp and mould seriously, because if it isn't treated it can affect your health, wellbeing and the condition of your home. Damp and mould issues can be caused by a range of things, including leaking pipes, rising damp and condensation. Mould can grow on any surface but it's typically found around windows and doors, around the edges of rooms and even in cupboards or wardrobes. It's relatively easy to deal with if it's caught early, so please let us know as soon as you can if you spot damp or mould, so that we can investigate and take action.

Don't hesitate to let us know – we're here to help. For more information visit our damp, mould and condensation policy at: cheltenham.gov.uk/cbc-housing-policies

Looking after your home:

You are responsible for the following:

- Repairing deliberate or accidental damage
- Decoration inside your home
- Replacing plugs to bath, basin or sink
- Dishwasher/washing machine plumbing
- Installation of cookers (gas and electric)
- Removing garden rubbish
- Changing batteries in smoke alarms
- Replacing mirrors and toilet roll holders

- Replacing fluorescent tubes and starter motors
- Adapting doors to accommodate carpets
- Supplying individual washing lines
- Fitting extra electrical sockets
- TV Aerials – CBC will only maintain communal aerials
- Garden paths – CBC will only maintain the paths that give access from public footpaths to your home and existing paths in communal gardens
- Garden fences and gates – CBC will only repair/replace wooden fences and gates installed by CBC which are connected to public land. Fencing between properties will be maintained with posts and wire fencing.
- Garden sheds and greenhouses – CBC will only carry out repairs to existing sheds that belong to CBC, we are not responsible for maintaining greenhouses.

Smoke Alarms:

You must test and clean your smoke alarm regularly and if it is a battery operated alarm, you are responsible for replacing the batteries.

Home Improvement:

You must obtain written permission before you:

- Do any work on electrical, gas or water services
- Do any work to structural walls or doorways
- Fit any new doors or windows
- Refit a kitchen or bathroom
- Install a shower
- Change fireplaces, install fires or central heating
- Build any extensions
- Build a shed/greenhouse
- Build a garage or hard standing for a vehicle

We will need details including a description of the work and plans proposed and you can't undertake any of the planned work until you have written permission from us for it to go ahead. If permission is not sought, CBC may take tenancy action against you to remedy the breach.

Communal areas

We aim to ensure that all communal areas of flats (including the gardens) are kept clean, free of rubbish and maintained to a high standard.

It is your responsibility to:

- keep the communal areas clear of obstruction
- carefully disposing of any household waste
- keeping security doors closed

- reporting any repairs/damage/graffiti to us
- keeping proper control of your pets
- telling us if you are not happy with the standard of communal cleaning

Refuse collection and recycling

If you experience any problems with this service please contact the customer service team on 01242 262626

Removal of bulky items

If you have bulky items to be collected for which there is a collection charge, please call the customer service team on 01242 262626

Have your say

We believe involving you and providing opportunities to feedback about our services or your experiences is important. This helps us ensure we're improving and delivering great services for you and your family.

There are lots of ways to have your say both formally and informally, you can:

- Take part in focus groups or surveys
- Become a member of our Tenant Panel. These residents serve as a local link for their area and a representative for their neighbours
- Review our policies and tell us what needs to change
- Work with other residents to review and improve our services

We'll provide you with all the support and training needed to fulfil these roles

Visit cheltenham.gov.uk/get-involved-tenants-and-leaseholders for more on customer involvement.

Feedback and complaints

We welcome your feedback and use it to improve the services we provide.

If something has gone wrong with your home or our services, please let us know so we can put things right. We'll try to resolve your issue when you first contact us.

Please also let us know when we've gone the extra mile – it's always great to record this and make our employees aware of it.

Visit cheltenham.gov.uk/housing-complaints for details and information on how to make a complaint or ring our customer service team on 0800 408 0000

If you need further help, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time.

Visit housing-ombudsman.org.uk for their contact details.

Getting in touch with us

For any other queries, contact us using the details below:

Phone us on 0800 408 0000 or email housing@cheltenham.gov.uk

This handbook is a shortened version of the key information you need. Visit our website for more detailed information on our services. If needed, we'll do our best to provide this document in another language or format. Email or call us using the details above to request this.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

When you signed your tenancy you agreed to be responsible for the behaviours of everyone living and visiting your home.

Anti-social behaviour causes genuine nuisance and can range from problems with rubbish filled gardens to more serious problems such as drug dealing or harassment.

We take anti-social behaviour seriously and believe everyone has the right to not be bothered by other people's behaviours. We will do what we can to stop it.

Any criminal behaviour should be reported to the police.

If you are experiencing any forms of ASB please contact your ASB officer on 0800 408 0000

Domestic abuse

If you're experiencing domestic abuse, call us on **0800 408 0000** for advice. We can help make your home more secure, support you and work with relevant agencies.

Call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger. Alternatively, contact your local neighbourhood policing team for support if it's not an emergency. You can also contact the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on **0808 200 0247**, 24 hours a day.

We know some people may struggle to find a time to talk and need to keep things confidential. Email us on housing@cheltenham.gov.uk for advice if necessary.

Visit ncha.org.uk/care-and-support/emergency-support-and-advice/domestic-abuse for more advice on the support available.

Need extra support?

If you need any specific or additional support from us, please let us know through your online portal account at portal.cbh.org or by calling us on **0800 408 0000**, so we can tailor our services to make them more accessible for you.

For example, if we know you have a visual impairment, we can give you information in large print or a format you can listen to.

If you require this document in any other format please contact housing@cheltenham.gov.uk or call 0800 408 0000

如需此文件的其他格式，请联系 housing@cheltenham.gov.uk 或致电 0800 408 0000

જો તમે આ દસ્તાવેજ અન્ય કોઈપણ ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવા માંગતા હો, તો કૃપા કરીને housing@cheltenham.gov.uk અથવા 0800 408 0000 પર સંપર્ક કરો

Jeśli niniejszy dokument wymagany jest w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt z housing@cheltenham.gov.uk lub zadzwoń pod numer 0800 408 0000