

gch CONNECT

TENANTS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO



Pride. Quality. **Integrity.** Innovation.

www.gch.co.uk

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE



WELCOME to our June issue of GCH Connect where we're focussing attention on our open spaces which come into their own in the summer months.

Now we are in June I can no longer use 'No Mow May' as an excuse not to cut my lawn. If, like me, you'll be getting your lawn mower out one evening this week maybe give a thought to see if one of your neighbours needs a helping hand.

Earlier this month I had the opportunity to spend a day in Matson with our team responsible for cleaning all the indoor communal spaces. I was really impressed to see how much pride and dedication the team have for the work they do. It also gave me an opportunity to see the progress being made on the first homes that are benefiting from our investment to improve energy efficiency. You can read more about it on page 6.

Working together to keep everyone safe is important to us, on pages 4 & 5 you can find out more about what our Home Safety Team do when they come for your annual home safety visit.

When we get in touch to arrange an appointment we will be as flexible as we can but please work with us so we can make sure your home is safe.

Our Neighbourhood Patch teams are busy planning for Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness week in July highlighting what we and our partners are doing to keep your neighbourhoods safe – keep a lookout, we would love to hear your ideas.

Listening to what you've told us, we have created a new team, bringing colleagues together from different teams, to make sure we can listen and respond to customer feedback. And when things go wrong, manage complaints better. You can meet the new team on page 8.

We are proud to be working in partnership with Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire who offer free support to anyone living in Gloucestershire wanting to make a change to improve their health and wellbeing. If you are in receipt of benefits and over the next year may be moving across to Universal Credit, don't worry, our own Tenancy Sustainment Team are available to support – find out more on page 11.

To mark Pride Month I talk on page 12 about my personal commitment to make sure at GCH we focus on being an inclusive organisation, here for everyone. It's been great to see that entries have started coming in for our annual gardening competition - this year the focus is on gardening for biodiversity and we are so pleased that Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust will be helping us to judge the entries.

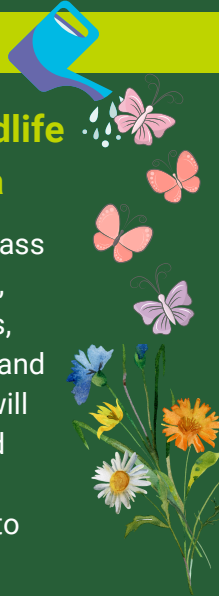
Guy Stenson
Chief Executive

GARDEN COMPETITION



Create a wildlife friendly area

A mix of long grass and wildflowers, such as poppies, corn marigolds and ox-eye daisies will attract bees and butterflies, and provide shelter to other animals.



Plant a windowbox



Use edible flowers and herbs like nasturtiums, scented-leaf pelargoniums, lavender, chives, sage and rosemary - great for the bees and the kitchen too!

Tell us how you'd like to encourage wildlife in communal areas



Our 2023 garden competition is now open and we'd love to hear your ideas for making where you live more wildlife-friendly.

Simply tell us in no more than 150 words what you would like to do to encourage wildlife into your home, garden or communal area.

Send us photos of the areas you'd like to transform, whether that's a windowbox, a garden or a communal area. Any garden of any type or size can be entered and everyone is in with a chance of winning a prize. Thanks to our friends at Safpro, the winner of the best communal garden idea will win £100 of gardening vouchers. There are vouchers for the winning balcony and private garden too.

There are three categories:

- windowbox or balcony garden
- private garden
- communal area

To enter the 2023 competition please submit your ideas and photos to us by the end of July. Fill out the [online form](#) or email communications@gch.co.uk

Vote for your Favourite

The judges for the competition will be our Estates Manager Joe O'Riordan, a representative from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust... and you! We will post all entries on our Facebook page and the entry with the most reactions and comments by the end of July will get the audience vote.

Get your friends and neighbours involved and let's get Gloucester Gardening for Wildlife!

HOME SAFETY CHECKS

...and why we do them



The safety of our customers and their peace of mind is our highest priority. That's why we undertake an Annual Home Safety Check at every property - with or without a gas supply.



During your Home Safety Check visit, our engineers will carry out a gas safety inspection including servicing of gas boilers, appliances and pipework as well as all smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors fitted in your home.

They'll also carry out a visual inspection of the front door of your flat or maisonette, if your entrance door leads onto the communal escape route of the building.



“ If you can't be safe at home, where can you be safe? It's so important that people's homes and neighbourhoods are safe to give them peace of mind. That's why we make it our highest priority. ”

Tara Jones
Compliance Manager

100%

GCH properties with a valid gas certificate by anniversary date



Last year we carried out 5040 Home Safety checks and spent £980,000 on fire safety improvement in communal areas in 112 blocks.

HOME SAFETY CHECKS

how to keep you and your family safe



Allow us access to your home to complete Home Safety Checks. We're here to make sure you, your family, and your neighbours' homes are safe.

Check any personal gas appliances you own every year. You should arrange for these to be checked and serviced regularly by a Gas Safe registered engineer as GCH is not responsible for gas appliances you own.



Look out for your local community. A friend, relative or neighbour may be unaware of what they need to do to keep safe. Help them stay safe by ensuring they have their appliances checked and serviced regularly.

Check for warning signs that could indicate your appliances are not working correctly.

Signs may include:

- lazy yellow/orange flames instead of crisp blue ones
- black marks on or around the appliance
- a pilot light that keeps going out
- too much condensation in the room

Know the six main symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

- headaches
- nausea
- breathlessness
- dizziness
- collapse
- loss of consciousness

6 main symptoms to look out for:



HEADACHES



NAUSEA



BREATHLESSNESS



COLLAPSE



DIZZINESS



LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

INVESTING IN HOMES

improving energy efficiency



Gloucester City Homes is investing £5.8 million to improve the energy efficiency of around 170 homes in Gloucester, with the help of government grants worth £2 million.

The work to retrofit homes in Matson and St Pauls Court means adding external wall insulation, loft insulation, ventilation upgrades and window replacements.

The investment will help cut customers' energy bills and carbon emissions and improve the health and wellbeing of tenants. Not only will homes be warmer in winter, but the added insulation will also keep them cooler in the summer.



We caught up with Garfield, one of GCH's surveyors, and Andy, site manager for our contractor Lovell, to explain what exactly is involved. [Watch the video](#) to find out!

It's also good news for the green economy and retrofit sector in Gloucestershire, as we'll employ a local site manager to oversee the project and support local businesses to develop a supply chain.



This is an exciting expansion of our decarbonisation programme to tackle the climate crisis and the next step in ensuring our homes are greener, cleaner and cheaper to heat.

Robert Panou

Director of Homes & Sustainability



SAY

Hello!



Chat to the GCH team about anything that concerns you or suggest an improvement we could make

Thursday 22nd June	12pm – 3pm	Library Green Space, Matson Avenue
Thursday 13th July	1pm – 4pm	Sebert Street Greenspace, Kingsholm
Thursday 20th July	2pm – 4pm	Coney Hill Shops
Thursday 27th July	12pm – 3pm	Meadowleaze Play Area, Elmbridge
Friday 4th August	12pm – 3pm	Chester Road Play Area, Cathedral City

...AND AT THESE CITY EVENTS

Saturday 2 September
The Last Blast
Baneberry Rd Greenspace

Saturday 19 August
40th birthday celebration
The Venture: White City

Saturday 9 September
Pride Day & Parade
Gloucester Park



For more details call Mandi Holt on 07852 915077 or email Mandi.Holt@gch.co.uk

MEET OUR NEW CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TEAM



Responding to an issue raised by a customer can sometimes involve lots of people working across different departments of GCH. And with over 5,000 homes to look after, keeping track of complaints – and more importantly, keeping the customer informed of progress – can be a challenge.

That's where our new Customer Satisfaction colleagues come in. Brought together from teams across the organisation, Tori, Emily and Leila will be working with customers to produce a new way of managing customer feedback and dissatisfaction more effectively. They have joined the Customer Experience team under the leadership of Laurie Williams.



"We've heard from customers that the previous approach hasn't worked as well as it could for everyone," says Laurie. "Our new dedicated team will make sure the customer voice is heard so that we can learn from mistakes and improve our service."



Hi, I'm Tori and I've worked at GCH for over 10 years. I am a Gloucester resident and I enjoy spending time with my family and friends.



Hi, I'm Emily. I've worked at GCH for five and a half years and previously have worked in PropertyCare and the Governance Team.



I'm Leila and I have been working within customer relations for 10 years now. I'm a Wiltshire girl and love going on adventures with my family and creating new memories.

CLEAN SWEEP

looking after communal areas



Each GCH building with a communal room, shared stairwell or entrance lobby is visited weekly by our team of cleaners to make sure it's kept clean. Earlier this month Guy, our Chief Executive, spent the day cleaning communal areas in Matson together with regular team member Darren.

It was a great opportunity to see first-hand the difference this team makes and to thank them for the pride they take in what they do. If there is one ask of everyone from Guy's experience – please try not to store bicycles, buggies or toys in the stairwells. Not only is it a fire hazard potentially putting lives at risk, it makes it so much harder for the team to keep your stairwells clean.

WASTE WIZARD

The Waste Wizard has been launched by Gloucestershire Resources & Waste Partnership.

Type in the name of any item along with your postcode to find out whether it can be reused, repaired, donated or recycled, or if it needs to go into a specific bin or collection.

Visit [Waste Wizard](#) to use the online tool.

We know how important taking pride in our homes and neighbourhoods is to all of us. Our dedicated team of cleaners take pride in keeping communal areas clean. And we can all do our bit by recycling and disposing of waste responsibly.



£60,000

spent removing fly-tipping

Last year, GCH spent £60,000 removing fly-tipping. It's a serious criminal offence, punishable by a fine of up to £50,000 or 12 months imprisonment.

Did you know that many incidents of fly tipping are caused by people using unregistered waste carriers to dispose of rubbish? Householders can be fined up to £400 if they pass their waste to an unlicensed waste carrier which is subsequently fly-tipped. Find out how to avoid fly tipping by visiting [Recycling Gloucestershire website](#).

[Report fly tipping - Gloucester City Council](#)

NEW!

Gloucester City Council is working with **Podback** to provide a new free recycling service, helping you to recycle your pods (coffee, tea and hot chocolate pods) at home.





Introducing Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire's free programmes for a better, healthier you.


Their free, specialist 12-week coaching programmes are tailored to your individual needs, goals, and existing lifestyle so that you can become the best, healthiest version of yourself. Specialist health coaches are trained to support you in...


- Stopping smoking
- Getting more active
- Drinking less alcohol
- Managing your weight
- Staying healthy during pregnancy

They'll personally work with you to create new habits and do so by taking a step-by-step approach so that these are sustainable in the long run, not just for a short while. The sessions either take place over the phone, virtually, or face to face, depending on what is best suited to your lifestyle.

If you'd like to start your journey to becoming your best self, contact the team on 0800 122 3788 or email glicb.hlsglos@nhs.net

 Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire

 HealthyLifestylesGlos

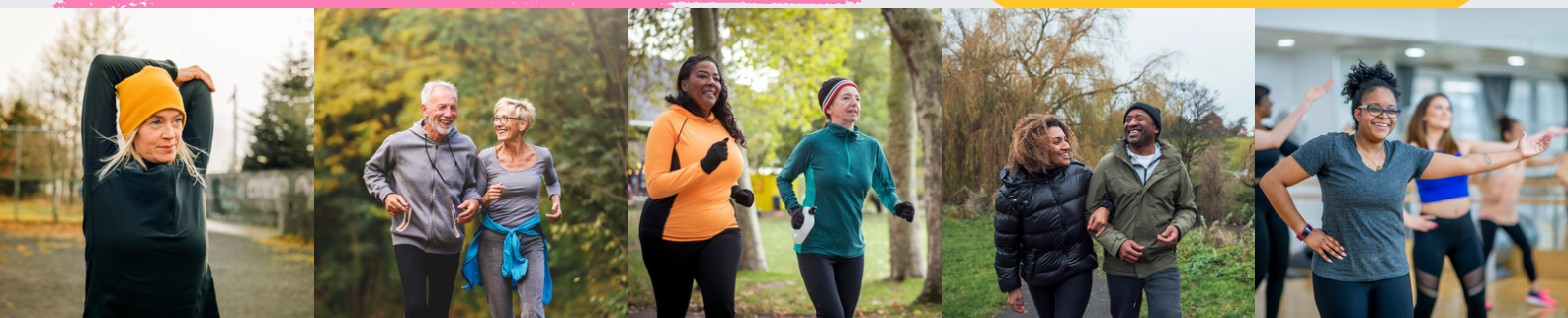
 Twitter: @HLSGlos

For even further support, the '**Best-You**' platform is your one-stop place for creating healthy lifestyle goals, tracking your progress, regular tips, and more: www.best-you.org

"I want to say a huge thank you to the service, What I have enjoyed most about our conversations has been that you were able to come up with creative ideas for behaviour change. Every call has had a takeaway from it."
Michael

I used to weigh myself all the time and get depressed and not carry on with things. Now, because I know I am doing the right things, I focus less on the scales and know they will show the change in the end.
Charlene

I am now smoke-free for 3 months and I am confident that I will not start smoking again.
Harold



BENEFITS CHANGES

we're here to help



Now's the time to find out if you'll be better off under Universal Credit and when to claim. Our Tenancy Sustainment Team explains why.

If you are in receipt of some form of benefit, such as housing benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance, there are some changes coming which might affect how much benefit income you receive and how your rent is paid. It's best to prepare for that as soon as you can.

You don't need to do anything until you get a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) called a 'Universal Credit Migration Letter'. But it's good to be ready in advance because once you've got the letter, you'll only have three months to make your Universal Credit claim.

Universal credit is calculated differently to the old benefits which means that whilst some people find they are better off, others may



find they receive less income. You might also need to start paying your rent directly to us and to start budgeting for this, if previously your rent was paid directly to us through housing benefit.

Our friendly Tenancy Sustainment Team is here to help. It may be that they can help you increase the money you are entitled to – or at the very least they will be able to help you submit your claim and share some practical tips that might help you with budgeting.

If your benefits income is reducing, there may be some short term help available - but you won't be eligible for this if your Universal Credit application is submitted late.



If you think you might be affected, then take a look at our benefits calculator here www.gch.co.uk/budget to complete a self assessment.

You can email us or give us a call. Contact the team on 01452 833217 or email tenancy.sustainment@gch.co.uk

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



a year-round commitment



As Chief Executive at Gloucester City Homes I spend quite a bit of time out and about in Gloucester. We've no 'gay village' or even, as far as I am aware, a single LGBTQ+ venue, but a little while ago I noticed that Caffé Nero on Southgate displays the progress pride flag inside their store and has information displayed about local LGBTQ+ social groups on their community notice board all year round. For people like me, they have very subtly shown themselves to be a safe space and let both their customers and potential employees from the LGBTQ+ communities know that they are welcomed on their terms, at any time.

That is very much the approach that I want to promote within GCH. We've a relatively small team so can probably never genuinely reflect all the diversity and difference within our community but I'm passionate about making sure as many people as possible can see themselves at GCH, whether as colleagues or customers. It's something we're committed to year-round.

Just like Caffé Nero, we want you to know we're here for all our customers when you need us. Whilst it's true there has been massive progress in visibility, rights and inclusion within society for many marginalised groups, sadly we know that for some of us, discrimination, violence and intimidation is still our day to day reality. Simply because of who we are, the colour of our skin, the country we come from, our sexuality or because we have a disability.

If you experience hate crime from a neighbour, we'll work with our partners, like Gloucestershire Police, to take it seriously, listen to and support you. Recently I learnt how a school friend has been suffering homophobic abuse from a neighbour for several years and struggled to get his landlord, a London borough housing department, to recognise it or do anything to help him. He was let down. I'm determined no GCH customer experiencing hate crime of any kind should feel the same. Perhaps see you at Gloucester Pride in September.

Each year June sees organisations dusting off the rainbow logos and getting out the glitter to mark Pride month. At GCH our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is a year round commitment, says Guy Stenson



USEFUL CONTACTS AND INFORMATION



Email us:

please contact
the team you
need directly...

Housing, Anti-Social Behaviour, Rent & Independent Living

customer.experience@gch.co.uk

Repairs – repairs@gch.co.uk

Homeless Team – homeless@gch.co.uk

Tenancy Sustainment – tenancy.sustainment@gch.co.uk

Leaseholders – customer.experience@gch.co.uk



Speak to us:

01452 424344

Open for emergencies 24/7

COMPLAINTS

We are always willing to listen to see if we can make things right. But if you do need to make a formal complaint, the [Housing Ombudsman](#) Service is available to provide support and guidance to all tenants. More information about the support they can provide can be found on their website or via telephone on **0300 111 3000**



Write to us:

Gloucester City Homes,
Railway House, Bruton Way,
Gloucester GL1 1DG

OTHER AGENCIES

[Household support fund](#)

[Find your local Councillor](#)

[Waste Collection services - Gloucester City Council](#)

[NHS Patient Advice and Support](#)

[Gloucestershire Constabulary](#)

ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME VOUCHERS

A reminder that those who are eligible have until 30 June to claim energy bills support scheme vouchers.

- Vouchers are worth up to £400 which will be put on your prepayment meter.
- Check your post, email or texts.
- If you have lost your vouchers, or they have the incorrect details, or you never received them, then contact your energy supplier.
- There is £130 million across the UK in unclaimed vouchers



Gloucester City Homes is committed to equal opportunities. We actively encourage applications from all sections of our community, particularly those with lived experience of our work.

We celebrate the diverse nature of our customers and colleagues, striving to develop diverse teams where everyone can be their authentic self through an inclusive, family-friendly, flexible culture.

#SeeYourselfAtGCH



View our opportunities at
gch.co.uk/jobs