

gch CONNECT

TENANTS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO



Pride. Quality. Integrity. Innovation.

www.gch.co.uk

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WELCOME to our September issue of GCH Connect

We're thinking ahead to the colder months and making sure we are prepared for the winter to come. We're holding a series of events this month focussing on damp and mould. We'll have a team of staff ready to answer your questions and offer you as much support as we can to keep your home and your family warm and healthy this winter. Drop in to any of our sessions in Matson, Podsmead or Kingsholm where we'll be delighted to see you.

Some good news to look forward to in October is the launch of ten new homes on the site of the old Robinswood pub in Matson. We're particularly pleased that these brand new homes will be available for social rent and we can't wait to welcome ten new families to become part of the Matson community.

In November we'll be celebrating a very special exhibition telling the stories of the residents of Clapham Court over the last 60 years – look out for more information nearer the time on our social media channels.

Our Tenancy Sustainment team are now holding benefit and budgeting advice sessions on alternate Tuesdays in Podsmead and Matson. And did you know that tenants can improve their credit rating by using their rental payment information in the same way that homeowners use their mortgage payments? Find out more on page 8.

You'll find information about our schedules for grounds maintenance and communal cleaning on pages 6 and 7. And a reminder, as bonfire season approaches, to think of your neighbours and avoid burning garden rubbish.

Finally, congratulations to all the entrants in this year's Garden competition. It's great to see so many wonderful gardens out there, bringing colour and enjoyment to the whole community. You can see photos on page 10.

I hope you enjoy reading your Connect Newsletter. I'm keen to hear your feedback and to know if there are any subjects you'd like to see covered in future newsletters.

Michael Hill
Executive Director of Customer Experience

LET'S TALK: DAMP AND MOULD

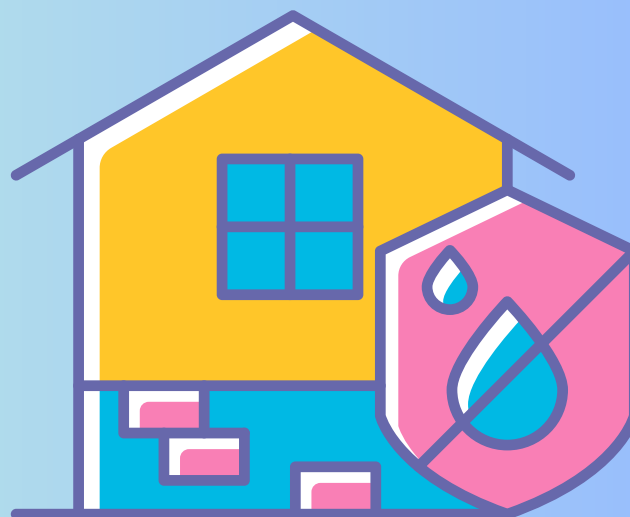


We're about to lift the lid, pull back the covers and shine a light into dark corners. Coming to your area with a team of specialists to get on the case of damp and mould.

As the nights draw in, we want to help our customers get ready for winter when we can expect to see a spike in reports of damp and mould in homes. There are things we can jointly do to help tackle this problem.

Our experts will be on hand to offer advice on reducing moisture, improving ventilation and keeping your home heated. Our Tenancy Sustainment team will offer advice on benefits available and Warm and Well will offer free local home energy advice.

Come along to our drop-in sessions in Matson, Podsmead and Kingsholm on the dates below.



We've listened to customer feedback to overhaul our response to damp and mould reports. We now visit within five working days to assess the works required and arrange treatment where necessary. We're also making sure that early signs aren't missed, by asking specifically about damp and mould in our quarterly customer telephone surveys.



expert help



demonstrations



free giveaways



energy saving advice from WarmandWell.co.uk

THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 3-6PM

THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 3-6PM

TUESDAY 3 OCTOBER 3-6PM

**MATSON BAPTIST CHURCH
POET'S PANTRY, PODSMEAD
ROOTS CAFÉ, KINGSHOLM**

INVESTING IN HOMES

new developments coming soon



In October, an unloved, derelict site in Matson will be transformed into ten brand-new properties that anyone would be proud to call home.



The old Robinswood pub in Matson had lain empty and unloved for five years, following a devastating fire. The ruin became an eyesore and was starting to attract anti-social behaviour.

Now The Robinswood will see ten new homes built to a high quality and delivering the highest energy-efficiency A-band rating.

Not only will these provide a firm foundation for families in Matson, but the new development will generate income that can be invested in existing homes. Without new developments like these, GCH would not be able to improve the energy efficiency of some of our older properties, as we are currently doing in Matson and Linden.

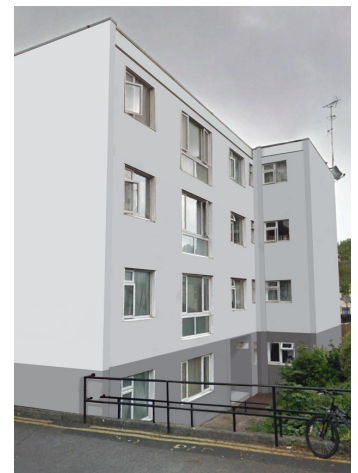
All available GCH homes are advertised on www.homesekerplus.co.uk



“These homes will be available at social rent which makes them affordable for families who might otherwise struggle to find a place to live. Affordable homes are fundamental to creating sustainable communities where people can thrive. That’s why we worked so hard to secure this site.”

Robert Panou, Director of Homes & Sustainability

Investment in external wall cladding and ventilation upgrades for some of our more poorly insulated homes will help cut carbon emissions and improve health and wellbeing.



Artist's impression of improvements to St Paul's Court

We're backing the Build Social Campaign: calling for all political parties to commit to building substantial numbers of social rent homes ahead of the next general election.





"Gas Safety Week is a great opportunity to highlight some of the unfortunate incidents that happen all over the UK. When a gas appliance breaks down, it may be tempting to try fixing it yourself to save money, but don't risk DIY.

We're legally obliged to provide a valid gas and electrical certificate for our homes. We've achieved 100% compliance, but we go even further than that. We also service our appliances to the manufacturer's guidelines, test the gas supply for leaks, check smoke, heat and CO alarms and if required, check your fire door for any remedial works. If the Gas is safe, that's one big tick checked off your list for the year!"

As we marked Gas Safety Week in September, our Gas Supervisor Daniel Sadler explains why it's so relevant.



"Taking shortcuts might allow time and money to be spent elsewhere but at what cost? Your health? Your safety? Your home? Your family?" asks Daniel



Following reports of anti-social behaviour in the Westgate area, we have successfully applied for an Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction for someone who is not a GCH tenant but whose behaviour has been having a negative impact on residents in the area. The offender risks arrest if he breaches the conditions of the order.

Claire Long, Community Safety & Enforcement Manager, says: "some vulnerable customers living in the Westgate area have suffered months of harassment and distress because of this individual. It can take time working in partnership to tackle complex ASB reports like this one, but we are pleased with the outcome and the message it sends that antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated."

I MOW, I MOW

it's off to work we go



With over 180,000 square metres of green spaces to maintain, careful scheduling of mowing, strimming and hedge-trimming is key. GCH Estates Manager Joe O’Riordan tells us why.

“We want our customers to be proud of their homes and the communal areas that surround them and we take pride in keeping them well-maintained. Sometimes people have questions about our grass cutting schedules, so I’m glad to have the opportunity to explain more.

We are always looking to deliver the best value to our customers, so it’s important that we use the grounds maintenance team and our machinery in the most efficient way. This can mean we do part of a job one day and return to finish it the next - this particularly applies to grass cutting and strimming, where we might strim an area in preparation for the mowers to cut the following morning.

Here’s a rough idea of when you can expect to see our grounds maintenance team working on specific jobs (subject to change):



Grass cut every 3-4 weeks during March - October



Hedges cut between September - November and again February - March



Beds and borders maintained October - February.

Hedges will be predominantly cut in the autumn months when the grass cutting season and bird nesting season has come to an end. But if a hedge is presenting a health and safety issue, we’ll apply a light trim to eradicate this.

The spring/summer of 2023 has seen extensive growth of grass and hedges with the wet and warm weather provide optimum growing conditions. Our team are working extra hours to keep up with the demand.

Sometimes we’re asked about areas in the city that we don’t manage and which may be strimmed less frequently. In areas owned by GCH we’ll strim every time we cut the grass.”



If you do have any questions, please email us at customer.experience@gch.co.uk

CLEAN SWEEP

looking after communal areas



We work in partnership with ServiceMaster to clean our communal areas. They visit each block on a weekly basis to clean entrances, lobbies, corridors, stairways and lifts. Here's their weekly cleaning schedule:

Weekly

- Remove cobwebs from ceiling and walls
- Damp wipe entrance doors
- Damp wipe window ledges
- Damp wipe painted areas including doors, door frames and radiators
- Damp wipe handrails, balustrades, and doorknobs
- Clean lights/light switches and sockets
- Spot clean walls up to standing height, finger marks and dirt
- Clean under front and rear door mats
- Damp wipe skirting boards
- Clean lifts and lift lobbies
- Clean glass in entrance doors, internal partitions, and fire doors.
- Hoover floors
- Mop hard floors
- Sweep front and rear entrance areas
- Litter pick pathways to building and external areas around the building front and rear
- Remove cobweb from front and rear porches



image: ServiceMaster cleaning in Winnycroft Lane

Monthly

- Sweep bin store areas

Quarterly

- Clean internal and external windows

ServiceMaster value your feedback on the communal cleaning in your block. You can email or call communal.ops@servicemasternewbury.co.uk 01635 39979

MONEY MATTERS

we're here to help



The Rental Exchange allows tenants' rent payments to be counted towards their credit score in a similar way to mortgage payments for homeowners.

The Rental Exchange scheme is a way to strengthen your credit report without you needing to take on new credit. It enables GCH to share details about the rent you pay with Experian on a monthly basis. This is then included in your credit report, meaning you will be recognised for paying your rent on time.

The Rental Exchange helps you create an online history of your rental payments. It'll prove to companies that you're a reliable potential customer by proving who you are and where you live. This information on your file can make it quicker and easier to open a new bank account, get a new credit card, have a loan application approved, shop online or get better deals with utility companies.

Find out more at [Rental Exchange FAQs](#)

[Opt in to The Rental Exchange](#)



Our Tenancy Sustainment team are now offering benefit support and advice on Tuesdays at Podsmead Hub and the Redwell Centre.



TUESDAYS 10AM-1PM

1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month -

Drop in to the Podsmead Hub

2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month -

Appointments at the Redwell Centre

For Universal Credit advice and support, completing benefit applications, or liaising with other agencies such as the Department of Work and Pensions or the Local Authority, our Tenancy Sustainment team can help.

They can also answer rent account queries and help you set up your household budget and prioritise your payments. If you need more specialist financial help, they can signpost where you might find it.

Drop into the Podsmead Hub on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month or make an appointment at the Redwell Centre on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month.

CLAPHAM COURT EXHIBITION



Clapham Court - an iconic feature of the Kingsholm and Gloucester skyline for over 50 years - is due for demolition next year. We've been working with Gloucester's Creative Solutions to tell the story of Clapham Court through photography, words, art installation, textiles, craft and painting before we say farewell to a building which has been home to so many for so long.



An array of artists has been gathering oral histories and interviews with current and past residents and responding to their words to create a unique and ground-breaking art installation which will open to the public in November this year.

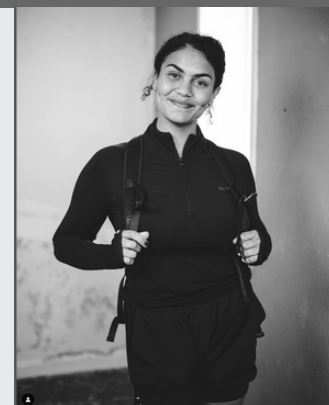
Jacqui Grange, curator and artist is leading the project alongside artists David Grange, Amy Freeman, Georgia Williams, Caroline Mc Catty, Jo Teague, Kim Kenny, Rider Shafique and Adam Coleman. She said: "Creative Solutions has been working with Gloucester artists who have a strong connection to the space and a sensitivity to the stories and memories of the residents. Expect the unexpected, to be entertained and provoked, and to see the city from an entirely different perspective."



"As well as artist takeovers in the flats, we'll have a 'research room' offering a fascinating insight to the history of the space, and we're starting work on a school's project. And the wonderful 'De Front Room' exhibition in celebration of Windrush 75 will be installed for Black History Month."

Why is Clapham Court being demolished?

Due to the unsustainable cost of maintaining the building and meeting our customers' needs, Clapham Court is being replaced. In its place GCH is planning a modern mix of homes and flats, a community space and a pharmacy which will be more sustainable and better suited to today.



Follow the project on Instagram:



@clapham.court

Photos: David Grange

GARDEN

COMPETITION WINNERS



WINNER: BEST COMMUNAL GARDEN



WINNER: PUBLIC VOTE



WINNER: BEST PRIVATE GARDEN



WINNER: BEST BALCONY GARDEN

Thank you to everyone who entered their gardens in our competition. We appreciate all the effort and pride taken to improve your homes and communities.

A special thank you to our judges from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and to Safpro for all their support.

Our winners:

Private Garden: Marissa Organ

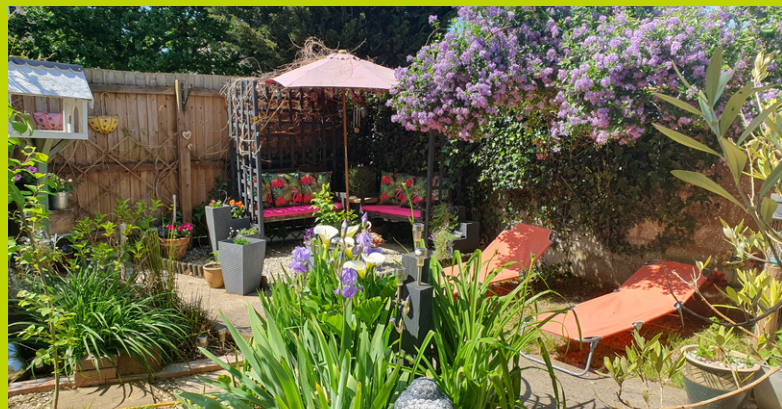
Communal Garden: Kevin Patterson

Balcony Garden: Nicholas Hayward

Public Vote: Philomena Gammon

Highly Commended: Catarina Godwin

Below: a selection of entries from this year's competition





BONFIRES & BULKY WASTE



...being a good neighbour

Think twice before lighting a bonfire.

You cannot get rid of household waste if it will cause pollution or harm people's health. This includes burning it.

Every year in Gloucester, firefighters are called out several times a week to deal with unnecessary waste fires. Fires can so easily get out of control, causing heartbreaking damage to homes and possessions.

In addition, smoke from burning fires can have a harmful effect on people with breathing difficulties and respiratory illness.

COMPOST IT
[getcomposting.com](https://www.getcomposting.com)

WASTE WIZARD

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.

Keep your garden tidy of bulky waste and overgrown plants

Tenants with private gardens must ensure to cut lawns regularly, cut hedges back, keep them free from rubbish and rubble and ensure fences and boundaries are kept in a reasonable condition.

Overgrown bushes and plants can impact on your neighbours, making it difficult to pass by safely.

Piles of bulky waste aren't just an eyesore - they can also harbour pests and disease.





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

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, you can do it via our website.

The [Housing Ombudsman Service](#) is available to provide support and guidance to all tenants. More information 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](#)



HouseProud

GCH has signed up to the [HouseProud Pledge](#) to show our commitment to LGBTQ+ resident equality and support.