

CORNWALL  
HOUSING



# home

Our Customer Magazine  
Spring 2025

**Meet our new  
repairs  
contractors  
Page 6**



**Who are CCS?  
Our new home safety  
checks and heating  
contractor  
Page 8**

**Find out more  
about the rent  
increase  
Page 10**



A CORNWALL  
COUNCIL COMPANY





# Hello



and welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of your Customer Magazine

It's been six months since we shared our plans to improve the repairs service and I'm delighted to introduce our new contractors.

We now have three dedicated repairs contractors (see page 6) and a specialist home safety and heating contractor (see page 8).

This is a big step toward improving the service and we know how important these changes are to you. You will still see many of the same people coming into your homes as they have moved to the new contractors, but the new firms bring with them new ways to organise and manage the repairs needed which will mean you get a better service. Our goal is simple: to complete repairs on the first visit whenever possible. Our interim repairs policy will stay in place as we make sure the changes are working as expected and you can still report repairs in the usual ways.

If the proposed rent increase is approved in February, it will give us much-needed additional funding for repairs and maintenance. This will help us make real progress in improving the condition of our homes. We understand you want to know how this funding will be spent and we're working

closely with the Council and the Tenants Forum to make sure it's invested where it's most needed.

Safety remains a huge focus for CHL. In this issue, you'll find important information about fire doors and how they help keep you safe at home. And don't miss the chance to join our Garden of the Year competition! It's a great way to showcase your outdoor space and celebrate the wonderful gardens in our community.

Finally, we really value your input, whether it is telling us about a single issue or talking generally about how CHL is performing. If you would like to get more involved with shaping how we deliver our services please do let us know. We have had a group of residents working with us to help shape the new repairs service and we will continue this as the change is delivered as well as looking at other services. If you want to get involved just email [myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk)

Happy reading!



**Su Spence**  
Managing Director



**Meet our new repairs contractors. Page 6**

**From balconies to blooms:  
How does your garden grow**

**Garden of the year 2025 open now**



**Whatever size or style of your garden, whether it be a balcony window box, patio, vegetable patch, or flowerbeds, everyone is invited to enter! We encourage children to get involved too, with lots of prizes and certificates to be won.**

## Categories for 2025

- Best overall garden
- Best creative space
- Best communal space
- Tallest sunflower for under 10's (parents to enter on their behalf)

**To be in with a chance of winning, you can:**



**Social media:**  
Send your photos and details in a private message to our Facebook page.



**Email:** your details and photos to [info@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@cornwallhousing.org.uk). Please mark the email for the attention of Julia Walsh.



**Phone:** 0300 1234 161 and ask for Julia so we can arrange for a photograph to be taken for you.

**The closing date for all entries will be Friday 31 July 2025. Members from the Cornwall Housing Tenants Forum will judge all entries and award the prizes.**

**Good Luck!**



## Fire doors: Your first line of defence

Fire doors are essential for protecting you, your neighbours, and your home.

If you live in a flat it is likely that your front door is a fire door, designed to stop fire and smoke from spreading to other areas.

Fire door  
keep shut

Fire door  
keep shut

### How you can help:

Always keep fire doors shut. Never block or tamper with self-closing devices.

Report any damage to fire doors by calling Cornwall Housing at 0300 1234 161.

Important: If you're thinking about replacing your front door, make sure you get Cornwall Housing's agreement first. This insures it meets fire safety standards and keeps your home safe.

By keeping fire doors in good condition and always closing them, you're helping protect lives and homes.

Together, we stay safe.



## Why the big push on electrical safety testing?

Ms Fuller  
had problems  
with her  
appliances  
because the  
wiring in her  
home needed  
updating

Electrical testing is important because it ensures that electrical systems are safe and functioning properly. It can help prevent hazards like electric shocks, fires, and other risks. It can also pick up problems with your home wiring that might damage your appliances.

Mrs Fuller thought something was wrong with her home wiring when she had to replace her kettle for a second time and her new TV also broke. An electrical safety test showed that the old wiring in her home might be the cause, and that her home needed her electrics updating.

"I couldn't have been happier with how it all went. I've been reassuring my neighbours and recommending to them they get it done. I couldn't have had a better service and now I have the reassurance that my electrics are now spot on."



## Why the big push on electrical testing now?



By law, the homes we rent had to be tested every ten years – and that has changed to every five years



We have over 3000 homes due to be tested in the next twelve months



Some of these homes have very old wiring, but even the wiring in newer homes can get damaged and cause problems

## What happens on an electrical test?

- Our specialist contractor will be in touch when your home is due for a 'EICR' check.
- It won't take too long. They'll need to check your fuse board, sockets, switches and light fittings.
- They shouldn't need to turn off your electric, and it won't cost you extra in electric.
- If we can't access your home, we may have to take court action. We can work with you to arrange the 'EICR' safety test at a time that meets your needs.



# Our new repairs contractors

Meet our new interim partners who'll be taking over day-to-day repairs in 3 different areas of the county in March.



## WMS Serving West Cornwall

WMS delivers out-of-hours and responsive repairs across the South West and has been working alongside Cornwall Housing since the business was formed in 2007.

Managing Director Michael Sussex said: "We have invested heavily in a new IT system that will provide real time information for Cornwall Housing and their residents so we can provide a first-class service and improve the repairs process for all stakeholders."

**A message from  
Ian Frazer**  
Executive Director of  
Asset Management

**“**We've chosen these contractors because they have the right people, skills and experience to help us deliver long awaited and lasting improvements to our repairs service. As we all settle into this new way of working over the coming months, our Interim Repairs Policy will remain in place to ensure a smooth transition. This means we'll continue to prioritise safety by focusing our efforts on the most urgent repairs.”

Using procurement frameworks, the 3 contracts have been awarded on a 3-year interim basis until longer-term arrangements are in place.



## Cardo Group - Wales and West Serving North East Cornwall

Cardo Group specialises in repairs and maintenance of social housing and public sector buildings and serves clients across South Wales and the South West of England.

Managing Director Rhydian James said: "We're committed to ensuring timely, reliable repairs while supporting local employment and creating meaningful social value. We aim to deliver a service that truly enhances the quality of life in the communities we serve."



## MD Group Serving South East Cornwall

The MD Group is one of the biggest building services companies in the South and South West, specialising in the affordable housing and public sectors.

Steve Devlin, Managing Director of MD Group said: "We'll 'Keep it Cornish' by creating employment and training opportunities for local people and by coordinating meaningful social value activity that helps communities thrive."



**Report your repairs to us in the usual ways:**  
**On our website: [www.cornwallhousing.org.uk](http://www.cornwallhousing.org.uk)**  
**By phone: 0300 1234 161**  
**By email: [info@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@cornwallhousing.org.uk)**



# Our new home safety checks and heating contractor: Correct Contract Services (CCS)

## Tenant involvement

After assessing all the tenders, we interviewed short-listed candidates in November. The interview panel included 2 tenants who questioned the contractors about how they planned to address concerns raised during our resident engagement throughout the summer of 2024.

## New milestone reached in new approach to keep residents safe

Ian Frazer, our Executive Director of Asset Management, said: “This contract award is an important step forward in our overhaul of home safety checks and heating repairs. It means we’re on target to go live with the new service in April 2025.

“Over the next 12 months, we’ll be phasing in services to minimise disruption, working closely with our new partner to prioritise resident safety and ensure a smooth transition to this new way of working.”

“We’ve listened to tenants’ concerns throughout the process of selecting CCS and will continue to do so both during and after the transition phase.”

Jordan Shelley, CCS’s Business Partnership Manager, said: ‘For 17 years, we’ve been a trusted partner for social housing providers across the UK, delivering comprehensive compliance services that ensure safe and comfortable living environments for tenants.’

“We’re delighted to extend our expertise to Cornwall Housing and we’ll be working together to improve the quality of life for residents.”



Our new partner Correct Contract Services (CCS) will be providing gas safety checks and heating system maintenance for all our properties across Cornwall from April. CCS has a long-established reputation for high quality compliance and heating services for social housing. We awarded the 10-year contract after an open tender.



## Electrical safety checks are a top priority - read all about why on page 5

We have several thousand to complete this year so we’ll continue using a range of trusted partners to carry out these checks. This will help smooth the transition to CCS who’ll take on the work in 2026.

Operatives from these partner contractors will all carry official ID cards – so don’t be afraid to ask to see them!

- RTJ Electrical
- Eljay Electrical
- Robert Heath Heating
- AC Electrical
- PH Jones
- Taylor Electrical
- Ecosafe



## Rent increase set to provide an additional £1.7 million for repairs and maintenance!

Your views are important to the Council and have been considered as they deliberate on what the rent level should be from April 2025.

The rent increase decision is made by the full Council in late February. The rent notice will be sent to all homes as soon as possible giving you the required months' notice.

### Your views

**146 residents took part in our rent survey last autumn.** Cornwall Tenants Forum met with the lead officer at the Council in October to discuss the 30 year Business Plan for the Council's homes and neighbourhoods, and following this they sent in formal comments in December to say that they want to ensure additional rent is invested in service improvement.

### You said



**Opinion is split about the proposal to increase rent in line with inflation at 2.7% and invest the additional funds on repairs and maintenance.** About a third agreed with the increase, and another third disagreed, with the other third neither agreeing or disagreeing

There are **concerns about affordability** with people struggling financially - most people don't know where to access support for everyday essentials.



We should **promote support** by email and on the web, but also use traditional methods for those who are not online

“

I think I speak for all Councillors when I say that setting the rent is one of our hardest decisions we make. We appreciate and take on board the feedback from tenants and we are acutely aware that we have a dilemma. Whilst all evidence shows our rents are low compared to other private and public landlords in Cornwall and much lower than many others across England. However, knowing the rents are low does not make them any easier for many people to pay when money is tight. We however do have to increase the rents to balance the budget and one of our goals this year is to push more resources into improving and maintaining your homes and as part of this we are borrowing to pull forward this investment. We are pleased that the growth in the repairs budget is greater than the amount of additional rent we will be charging from April.

”



**Councillor,  
Ollie Monk**

### What is the decision the Council has to make?



**Your rent pays for the housing service and maintenance of homes – council tax is not used for this.**



**Cornwall Council has some of the lowest rents in Cornwall and across England – with a rent increase cap set by Government.**



**Huge demand for more affordable homes – 115 more homes built or bought this year – more money on repairs.**



**Right to buy continues to reduce the number of homes.**



**Many of our homes are very old and costly to repair due to the construction.**



**Increasing costs for trades and materials and lots of competition for skilled labour in Cornwall.**



# The UK's landline phone system is changing

By January 2027, all landlines in the UK will switch from the old analogue system to a new digital one. But don't worry - your landline isn't going anywhere!

The good news is your landline isn't going away! For most people, this change will be simple and many customers are already switching when they upgrade to fibre broadband.

## What's changing?

Instead of plugging your phone into the wall socket, you'll plug it into your broadband router. Your phone provider will contact you before the change and explain what to do, including if you need new equipment like a router.

## What you need to know:

- If you use devices like telecare alarms, health monitors, or burglar alarms, check with the provider to make sure they'll still work with the new system.
- If you live in flats or blocks where Cornwall Housing provides services and equipment - such as lifeline alarms, fire alarms, lifts, door entry systems and CCTV - we'll work with the system providers to ensure everything is ready for the switch.

## What you can do

- Check with your phone provider if you have questions.
- Ensure any alarms or health devices you use will work after the change.
- Remember, if you live in flats or blocks where we provide services and equipment - we'll handle any necessary upgrades.

Remember, your phone provider will be in touch to help guide you and get ready for the switch.



For more info, visit Digital Switchover <https://digitalphoneswitchover.com/>



## Say hello to Shane, Chair of the Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel.

We sat down with Shane to discuss the importance of scrutiny, recent changes and how you can get involved.

### What led you to join the panel?

I initially applied to be part of the complaints panel. A year later, the Comms and Engagement team invited me to join Scrutiny and I did! I've been part of the panel for four years, I became Interim Chair in December 2023 and was voted Chair in 2024. It's a great way to give back and be a voice for residents.

### What does the panel do and why is it important?

We're residents who deep dive into underperforming services, reviewing TSMs and KPIs to recommend improvements to Cornwall Housing. Businesses can be blind sided by their needs - the panel ensures residents' voices are heard and considered.

### What impact has it had?

We've influenced policy changes and suggested 'quick wins'. It's great to hear when managers at Cornwall Housing agree with our findings and have them acknowledged and implemented.

### What are your priorities in 2025?

We want more residents to join us!

### What would you say to anyone considering getting involved with Scrutiny?

Come observe a meeting - there's no pressure to join! See what we do, what we are about and we'll support you along the way. To find out more about how you can get involved with the Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel, please email [myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:myviews@cornwallhousing.org.uk) or phone 0300 1234 161

The scrutiny panel have recently completed a report on customer service and have taken their recommendations to the board. This report will be available online soon and you'll be able to read more in the next magazine.

## A message from John Harris, Chair of the CHL Tenants Forum

Our rents are due to rise by 2.7% from the 1st of April; Cornwall Council/Cornwall Housing say there is a need to keep a level of spending to cover the costs of repairs and maintenance and to achieve a higher standard for our homes.



This increase may seem low but Cornwall is a low wage area so any increase in the cost of living may have an impact on working people and any increase could push them over the edge into a situation where work is no longer viable.

The Council and Cornwall Housing have said that they plan to use the extra income generated by the rent increase on urgent issues like Damp & Mould, bringing the housing stock up to standard and improvements to services.

The Tenants Forum on behalf of all residents has been working to get guarantees that any additional income will be used for the benefit of its residents.

John Harris  
Chair of the CHL Tenant Forum  
03/02/2025



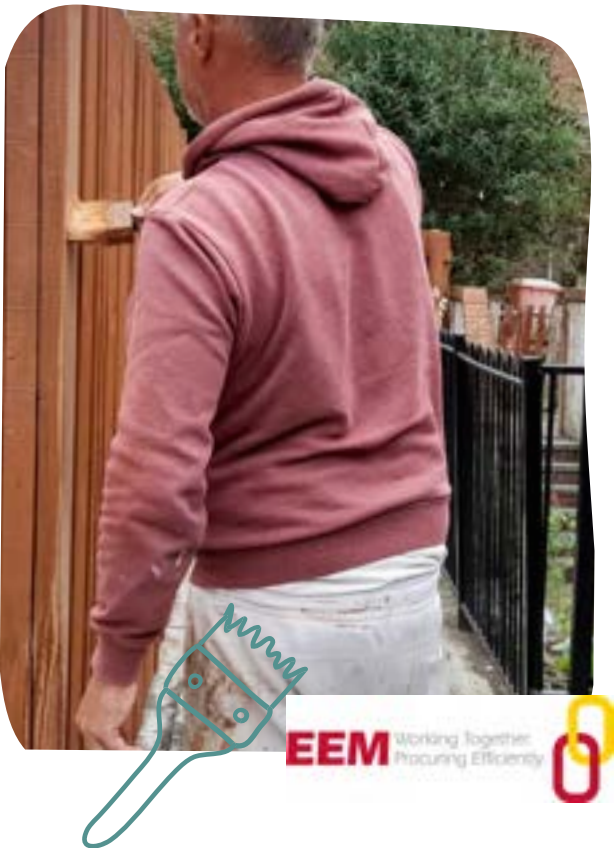
# How social value funding from our contractors is helping build better communities

Thanks to funding from our procurement contractor, EEM and its Social Value Fund, Cornwall Housing residents are seeing real benefits in their communities.

At Ridgeway Estate in Launceston, residents Darren and Rhys transformed their overgrown communal area. With EEM's support, they painted fences, fixed paving slabs, and added plants to create a bright, welcoming space for everyone to enjoy.

EEM also helped make the Kinsman Fun Day in Bodmin a success by funding prizes for children's games and activities, bringing the community together.

One tenant with severe arthritis received a laptop, funded by EEM, to help her access online services from home. This has made her daily tasks much easier and improved her quality of life.



## Oaklands Community Centre is now fully accessible – thanks to Harmony Fire for making this possible



This improvement ensures that everyone in Saltash, no matter their mobility needs, can enjoy all the wonderful activities and events Oaklands has to offer.

Nicky, who uses an electric scooter, said: "It's amazing to see this change. It's a real godsend, making it so much easier to get into the centre. I'll definitely be using it more!"

Oaklands is the heart of the Saltash community and with even more improvements planned for the future, Oaklands is growing into an even more vibrant community hub.

**A huge thank you to Harmony Fire for helping make this possible.**

## Boiler safety: What you need to know

Your boiler plays a big part in keeping your home warm and comfortable, so it's important to look after it properly.

Here are some simple tips and advice to help you stay safe, keep things running smoothly and know what to do if something goes wrong.

### Why boiler safety matters

A well-maintained boiler isn't just about warmth - it's about safety too!

Regular servicing helps to prevent dangerous carbon monoxide leaks, keep your boiler running efficiently (which can help lower your energy bills!) and helps avoid unexpected breakdowns.

### How you can help

A few small steps can make a big difference in keeping your boiler in good shape:

- Keep the area clear – Don't store anything around or under your boiler. It needs space for ventilation and safety.
- Look out for issues – If you hear strange noises, notice odd smells, or spot leaks, don't ignore them!

**We'll arrange a yearly safety check to make sure your boiler is working properly. Please ensure we can access your home when the time comes - it's a legal requirement and helps keep you safe.**

### What to do if there's a problem

Think something's wrong? Here's what to do:

1. **Take notes** – Write down any error codes or unusual behaviour.
2. **Take a photo** – If you see leaks or damage, snap a quick picture.
3. **Let us know ASAP** – The sooner we hear from you, the sooner we can help!

**By working together, we can keep your boiler running safely and efficiently all year round. If you have any concerns or questions, don't hesitate to get in touch by calling 0300 1234 161**





## Need some help or support?

### Cost of living advice

Our website lists a wide range of help for residents in Cornwall.

### If you're not online help is available by phone:

#### Age UK Cornwall

Helping people to live and age well. Call: 01872 266383

#### Community Energy Plus

Help with heating or other home energy costs. Freephone 0800 954 1956

#### Citizens Advice Cornwall

A wide range of support including debt and benefit advice. Call the Adviceline on 0808 812 7156 Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

#### Disability Cornwall

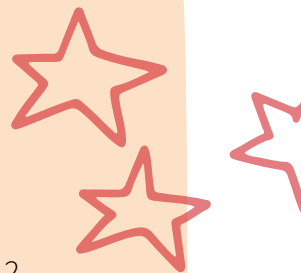
A wide range of support to people living with a long-term health condition or disability. Call DIAL on 01736 759500 or email [advice@dialcornwall.org.uk](mailto:advice@dialcornwall.org.uk)

#### Cornwall Carers Service

A range of support services for unpaid Carers throughout Cornwall. Call 01736 756655.

#### Cornwall Housing Inclusion Advisors

Information and support for managing rent payments for Cornwall Council and Cornwall Housing tenants. Call 0300 1234 161



## Contacting us

Contact us for anything to do with your tenancy, maintaining your home, or estate services that we look after. To contact us, call our customer service team on **0300 1234 161** or email [info@cornwallhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@cornwallhousing.org.uk). They can also direct you to your Area Housing Officer, Inclusion Advisor, or Rent Management Officer.



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