

Cheltenham Borough Homes



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Press Release

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Double delight! CBH shortlisted for two industry awards

Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) has been shortlisted for Innovation of the Year and Welfare Wise categories at this year's annual 24housing Awards.

The 24housing awards takes place at the Ricoh Arena, Coventry and brings the housing sector together to recognise the work that is done – and the individuals and teams who help to do it.

CBH has been shortlisted in the categories recognising innovation in the sector, and commitment to supporting tenants and local residents who need help with benefits.

In the first category, CBH's Help2 scheme has been shortlisted in recognition of the positive impact it has on tenants' lives. The scheme is a flexible support and crisis fund where colleagues recommend tenants for extra help to help them overcome hardships they may be experiencing. Over the last two years, Help2 has helped tenants to decorate their homes, provide new white goods and tackle food poverty. Last year John Lewis selected the scheme for its first 'Community Matters' campaign after opening in Cheltenham High Street, and donated £800 to Help2 as a result.

For the Welfare Wise category, CBH has been recognised for the efforts made to support local residents through the roll out of Universal Credit. CBH set up a drop-in service at Cheltenham Jobcentre to provide advice and support to people in Cheltenham who were experiencing difficulties with the implementation of Universal Credit. In the first full year alone the team helped 677 people, advising and supporting them through benefit claims and signposting to support available.

The work the team does has seen them build fantastic relationships with Jobcentre staff, the Department of Work and Pensions and other local partners to help support as many people as possible.

These latest nominations come shortly after CBH's Employment Initiatives Service was shortlisted for Inside Housing's Women in Housing Awards 2019 in recognition of the work they do supporting the CBH tenants and the wider community to support people back into work.

Paul Stephenson, chief executive at Cheltenham Borough Homes, said: "It's fantastic news that we've been shortlisted in two categories for some of the amazing work we do here at CBH.

"A lot of our focus, and that of the industry, is on building and maintaining homes – and rightly so. But we're also proud of the work we are doing to support the people who live in our homes. They're the people who our communities are built around, and sometimes they need support from us. This nomination is recognition of the efforts of our staff and I couldn't be more proud."

The ceremony takes place on 10th October, and we'll share how the team fare on the night.

For more information on the awards, go to: <https://www.24housingawards.co.uk/>.

ENDS

Editor's Notes:

More details about the respective award areas and the shortlisted aspects of the business below:

Welfare Wise:

With every passing year the work of the welfare teams becomes more important.

This award is looking for an organisation that is finding ways of helping residents tackle welfare policies such as Universal Credit or the Bedroom Tax, at a time when tenants are in more need than ever. Sponsored by: Allpay

CBH award submission

Anticipating that the complexities of Universal Credit would have a significant impact on our tenants, we've established an outstanding one-stop drop-in service at the local Jobcentre; working hand in hand with the DWP. We are embedded within the Jobcentre, figuratively part of the furniture and treated as colleagues.

Not only providing support to CBH tenants this service supports the wider community. In conjunction with the local Housing Options Homelessness Prevention Team, we have created an accessible service, which advocates for those reporting difficulties with their benefit claims, IT capabilities, household hardship or risk of homelessness.

- Assisted with 677 enquiries in the first full year

- Attended Work Coach appointments alongside vulnerable tenants
- Taken referrals from the NHS 2gether Trust Mental Health Team
- Presented the service to 40 external partners at DWP Complex/Vulnerable Needs meeting
- Completed 'Better off in work' calculations
- Secured Discretionary Housing Payments
- Raised awareness of Loan Shark Activities to financially vulnerable claimants and awarded securing back to back 'National Champions' recognition from the Illegal Money Lending Team
- Participate in the county's Suicide Prevention Partnership working group and raising awareness of support available
- Administer a in house crisis fund' to help tenants experiencing financial hardship, fuel poverty or appliance poverty

Innovation of the Year: Innovation is somewhat of an undefined buzzword. But what this award is looking for is an evidence-based submission on something your organisation has done to improve the organisation internally, save money, or improve the lives of tenants.

Recognising that financial problems are an adverse experience that affects our tenant's health, wellbeing, relationships and social mobility; CBH created a flexible support and crisis fund called Help2.

Help2 is an innovative solution that colleagues can access to ensure identified barriers/crises are overcome without delay or extensive application processes

Help2 empowers colleagues to assist tenants to overcome hardship that they may have been experiencing and would, without assistance, continue to go unresolved.

Understanding that adverse experiences force tough choices and that some households are 'going without', colleagues from all departments are in a position to make a difference and able to help overcome fuel, food or appliance poverty. Our scheme encourages colleagues to act on their observations and to take the lead to arrange for volunteers to help tenants complete things they themselves have been unable to achieve.

- Links with external partners
- CBH Committed £12,000
- Colleague volunteering scheme
- Free of charge 'Man in the Van' service
- Developed Voucher Schemes with local business for furniture and white goods
- External donation including £800, 302 Christmas presents, 48 Christmas Hampers and 257 donated children's coats
- Created a 'store cupboard' where donated items are stored for use in emergencies and for planned volunteering projects

Issued by: Shôn Douglas, Communications Team, Cheltenham Borough Homes, 01242 387 509, comms@cbh.org