

WINTER 2025 Homepage

Your Cottsway newsletter



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neighbourhood and you**

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and mould support**

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Your new-look newsletter

We've updated Homepage to give you more information about services, share customer stories and let you know how to get involved, because you're what matters most.

From now on, we'll send you a link to this by email, text, or in the post if you're not online - to ensure everyone's kept informed.

If you got this by post but use email or a smartphone, please help us save paper by updating your contact details so we can send you this magazine online: cottsway.co.uk/updatedetails

Not online? If you'd like support to get started with the internet, or if you want more details about anything included here, just give us a call - we're happy to help.



Wishing you season's greetings and all the best for 2026!

We'll be available during the festive period at the times below.

Tuesday 23 December:
8.30am - 3pm

**Wednesday 24 to
Friday 26 December:**
Closed

**Monday 29 and Tuesday
30 December:**
8.30am - 5.30pm

Wednesday 31 December:
8.30am - 4pm

Thursday 1 January:
Closed

Friday 2 January:
8.30am - 5.30pm

Emergency repairs

If there's a risk to your health, safety, or property, please call us anytime.

Ideas for our next issue?



We'd love to hear what you think of our new-look newsletter and what you'd like to see included. Do you know someone doing something great in your Cottsway community, or have a story to share about what your home means to you? Pass on your ideas: communications@cottsway.co.uk

Our Customer Engagement Plan 2026-29 will set out how we'll listen to your feedback, involve you in decisions, and ensure your feedback makes a difference - and we'd like your views.

Have your say on engagement

If you've joined our mailing list to receive our 'Cottsway Connect' e-zine and take part in surveys, keep an eye out for an email asking for your feedback (due by mid-December - don't forget to check your junk folder).

Otherwise, get in touch and we'll send you more information about how to have your say.

Share your thoughts by 4 January for a chance to win a £25 gift card of your choice!

If you'd like to opt in to receive Cottsway Connect with updates on community news, events and opportunities, please email:

communities@cottsway.co.uk



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Why not join us for your next estate inspection?”

Looking after your neighbourhood and you

Our Neighbourhood Housing Officers (NHOs) regularly check your estates and shared spaces to make sure everything's safe, clean and cared for.

We're making improvements following a Scrutiny Group review, which highlighted the need for more consistent inspections, better record keeping, and clearer updates for you.

One of the biggest changes already made is a new phone app for housing officers to take notes and photos and send repair requests straight away. This means things are getting fixed faster, and they can keep better track of issues.

Responding to other feedback - including 24% of communal customers saying they're unhappy with the way communal areas are cleaned and maintained - we're also working closely with our contractors to ensure they're delivering services to expected standards. We'll be keeping a close eye on this.



Matt Wilson is one of our NHOs. He was recently out on an estate inspection at flats in Chipping Norton. He says: "I checked the cleaning schedule, had a good look around the building - from the stairwells to the bin and bike stores and the lighting - and let the team know about some rubbish that needed clearing."

Why not join us for your next estate inspection? Find out when your next one is happening and get involved:

 cottsway.co.uk/estates

77%

of you are happy with our contribution to neighbourhoods

For more about communal grounds maintenance, cleaning and how to report communal repairs see:

 cottsway.co.uk/communal

Read the Scrutiny Group review and recommendations:

 cottsway.co.uk/scrutinygroup



Please report it

We can help with things like:

- Fly-tipping, rubbish or graffiti.
- Abandoned cars.
- Keeping play areas clean and safe.
- Fixing lighting and other repairs in shared areas.
- Making sure gardens and paths stay tidy.
- Anti-social behaviour.

Meet Ali Owens, our new Tenancy and Neighbourhood Housing Manager

Ali joined us at the end of last year and leads our neighbourhood and tenancy support teams. "I want everyone to feel safe, supported, and proud of where they live," she says.



Alongside improving estate inspections, Ali and her team have recently focussed on tackling ASB, keeping communities safe, and providing extra support to help customers start and sustain successful, happy tenancies.

How the team can help

- Visit you at home if you need support.
- Help with issues like mental health, domestic abuse, or money worries.
- Give advice on ASB problems.
- Work with councils and the police to keep areas safe.
- Support you with tenancy or housing issues.

Help to stay independent at home

If you or someone in your home has a disability or finds it hard to get around, help is available to make everyday life easier. Some costs might even be covered by a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

We can arrange small changes like handrails, grab rails, or lever taps. For bigger changes, like a stairlift, level-access shower, wheelchair-friendly kitchen, or a large ramp, your local council's occupational therapy team may be able to help.

That's what happened for Dianne, who's had an accessible shower and level-access path installed at her Cottsway home.

Dianne says: "I'm now able to get out of and into my home using my wheelchair and being able to sit down and shower means so much to me. I know that these are things that most people take for granted, but these little things are big for me and my family. It's made life so much easier for me. I am so happy."

 cottsway.co.uk/adaptations

“
It's made life so
much easier for me.
I am so happy.”



Need a bit of extra help?

If you're finding it hard to pay your rent, keep your home warm, or put food on the table, please reach out to us. We're here to listen, support you, and work together to find the help you need.

 cottsway.co.uk/welfare

Don't face abuse alone

If you, or another Cottsway customer you know, is experiencing physical, emotional, sexual or any other form of abuse, neglect or coercive behaviour, please tell us. We can liaise with the police and other authorities and help you find alternative accommodation if needed.

 cottsway.co.uk/abuse



“
...moving into our own house has been amazing and we love that it's so peaceful.”



From homeless to a home of their own

Deanna and partner Wade moved into their two-bedroom Cottsway home in Finstock earlier this year.

After a planned stay abroad with family didn't work out - and with Deanna heavily pregnant - the couple moved back to West Oxfordshire, where they had both lived before.

After spending eight months on the council's housing waiting list while living with another family member - and with baby daughter Violet arriving in the meantime - finally having a home of their own was a huge relief.

With help from our Housing Team, the couple and nine-month-old Violet, have settled in quickly and are enjoying making the house their home. Green-fingered Deanna works part-time at a garden centre so is loving having a garden, while Wade is an apprentice at a car manufacturer.

Deanna said: "After being homeless and sleeping on a sofa, moving into our own house has been amazing and we love that it's so peaceful. The staff at Cottsway have been really quick to help, usually fixing problems within a day or two. They even gave us a second-hand cooker

through their furniture re-use scheme, which helped us out a lot. Since we moved in we've been busy decorating and doing work in the garden and it's great to feel like we're home at last."



Family breakdown, illness, disability, or job loss can happen to anyone. If you're finding it difficult to manage at home, please reach out.

Our Community Fund is about helping people thrive, backing projects that bring communities together, boost wellbeing, and create new opportunities.

Supporting your communities to thrive

This year, £30k is available for individuals and community groups across West Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Worcestershire. So far, we've awarded nearly £26k to 13 projects - from sports clubs and village halls to toddler groups and financial education sessions.

This includes Bampton Bush Centre which has received just over £2,400 to support accessible transport to its weekly lunch club. This means older residents with mobility issues can still attend and enjoy meals, entertainment, and outings - helping to combat isolation.

Suzy Macpherson, Centre Chairperson, says: "For over 40 years, the centre has been a welcoming weekly lunch club for elderly and retired residents. Many of our lovely members are in their 80s and 90s, with our oldest at 103!

"Thanks to Cottsway's generous support, we've been able to support those who find it hard to get out and about to join in the fun. We're run almost entirely by volunteers and are so grateful for the funding that keeps our community thriving."

All applications are reviewed by our customers to make sure funding goes where it's most valued.

Want to have your say? Join our private Facebook group.

 [facebook.com/groups/cottswaycommunities](https://www.facebook.com/groups/cottswaycommunities)

“
...we've been able to support those who find it hard to get out and about to still join in the fun.”



Did you know?

As a Cottsway customer, you can apply for up to £250 to support your own or a household member's learning or skills development.



[cottsway.co.uk/fund](https://www.cottsway.co.uk/fund)



Digital phone line switchover

If you still have a traditional analogue phone line in your home, you'll need to switch to a digital line by January 2027. Contact your phone service provider.

They'll be able to explain the steps you need to take, including what to do if you have items like personal care alarms or security alarms that are connected to your line.

What happens when you report a repair? Kim Lovelock, one of our repairs operatives, gives us the inside story on how the team gets things fixed.

Looking after your home



86%

of you are satisfied that your home is well maintained

87%

are happy with our repairs service in the last 12 months

“ When you tell us something’s wrong, the first thing we do is work out how urgent it is. Not every job is an emergency, but every repair matters. We think about who lives in the home – for example, if anyone has health issues or extra needs – and what time of year it is, as well as about what it is that needs fixing.

We’ve got three main types of repairs:

Routine repairs are everyday jobs that aren’t dangerous but still need sorting. Think of dripping taps, plaster cracks, or a broken extractor fan. We aim to fix these within 20 working days, though sometimes it can take a bit longer if it’s part of a bigger or planned job.

Urgent repairs are more serious - like a loose handrail, faulty smoke detector, or a small water leak. We’ll usually be there within five days. If we can’t finish on the day, we’ll order parts and come back as soon as they arrive.

Emergency repairs are when something could put you in danger or seriously damage your home - such as a major leak, total loss of power, or no heating in winter. **In these cases, call us straight away - day or night - and we’ll be there within 24 hours.**



Missed appointments

If you can’t make your appointment, please let us know at least 24 hours before so we can offer the slot to someone else. Missing two appointments in a row may mean a £40 charge.

Of course, we hold ourselves to the same standard. If we miss two appointments without letting you know, you’ll get £40 compensation for the inconvenience.

You can report repairs through our customer portal, via an online form on our website, email, or by phone (**always phone us if it’s about damp or mould or an emergency**).

We’ll find a convenient time for your repair and give you a morning, afternoon, or all-day slot. We’ll text you the details and send a reminder (it will show as ‘Cottsway’). You can’t reply to that text, but you can contact us if you have questions. Someone aged 16 or over must be at home when we visit, and our staff will always carry ID badges.

Sometimes jobs take longer than expected if we find something unusual or need special parts, but we’ll always try to get things sorted quickly and leave your home tidy. ”



cottsway.co.uk/repairs



Planning for the future

We do property inspections called 'stock condition checks' every five years.

Surveyors check the structure of the home – including the roof and loft if you have one – as well as the main fittings like windows, boilers, kitchens, and bathrooms.

By carefully checking every home, we make sure properties are safe, well-maintained and ready for the future. This includes planning for things like kitchen and bathroom replacements and making energy efficiency improvements - so it's really important that we can gain access when it's time for your survey. We'll contact you in advance when yours is next due.



Warmer, greener homes

With the support of a £2.2 million grant from the government's Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, plus our own investment, we're upgrading over 200 older homes over the next three years with things like:

- Solar panels
- Air source heating
- Better ventilation
- Extra insulation

We want to do as much as we can to make older homes warmer and more energy efficient, hopefully helping to reduce household bills. We've already carried out similar upgrades at lots of other properties and will be doing more of this in the future.

100%

of our homes now meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard

100%

of safety checks carried out (gas, electrical, fire, asbestos, legionella and lift safety)

Over 80%

of our homes have A-C Energy Performance Certificate ratings



Fixing more, faster

Last year, we spent over £19 million fixing and improving homes - that's £6 million more than the year before!

This included work to make homes more energy efficient, replace old windows, and handle more repair requests.

Even with more repairs requests, we completed 100% of emergency repairs within 24 hours, and many of you told us you're happy with our repair service – but we want to get better.

One area we're focusing on is routine repairs. We want to do these more quickly, while keeping costs down. We've made some good progress on this – in April 2024, 59% were done on time and by March 2025 that rose to 73%.

On average during 2024-25, 70% of these repairs were done within our target time of 20 days, and over the first half of this year we've improved on this even more.

Since April, we've completed over:

- **7,000** routine repairs requested by customers
- **900** emergency repairs
- **140** new kitchen installations
- **65** new bathrooms

We've also repaired **139** vacated homes, ready for new tenants to move in.

Meet our new apprentices

We've recently welcomed Brandon as an apprentice electrician and Jake as an apprentice carpenter - both are massive football fans!

Our apprenticeship scheme gives trainees the chance to learn directly from experienced team members while studying for industry-recognised qualifications. We have other members of the team preparing to qualify or who've already completed their apprenticeships and have progressed into permanent roles.

We wish Brandon and Jake and all our apprentices every success.



Powering up electrical skills

Our experienced electricians are also adding new skills to their toolkit, so they're geared up to help maintain homes in the future.

They've been learning about installing air-source heating and solar panels and have recently trained at the Oxford Energy Academy to install and maintain Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points, so they're ready to help as electric vehicles become more common.



EV charging points - advice

- If an EV charger was fitted at a home when it was built, we'll maintain it.
- If you or someone else installed it, you're responsible for its upkeep.
- Thinking of getting an EV charging point? Please contact us first.



Dealing with damp and mould

Even if you do everything right, damp or mould can sometimes appear. If you spot it, call us straight away - we'll give you advice and fix any problems that need repairs.



Awaab's Law

You might have heard about Awaab's Law, named after a young boy from Rochdale who tragically died because of mould in his home. The law makes sure landlords fix damp and mould quickly.

Our team already works to these rules, but we've updated our processes and trained staff so they understand the new laws.

How we respond

If you rent your home and report an issue to us, we'll ask you some questions to help us understand how we need to respond:

Emergency hazards will be investigated within 24 hours of us being notified and any necessary safety work will be carried out as soon as reasonably possible (ideally within 24 hours).

Significant hazards are investigated within 10 working days, and a written summary given within 3 working days after the check, including details of any work needed. Preventative work to stop the problem from happening again will start within 5 working days if possible, with more complex work beginning within 12 weeks. All work will be finished in a reasonable time.

For damp and mould issues that do not fall into the two categories above but still need fixing, we may visit to assess the situation, but in any case, we will carry out any work as a routine repair (usually done within 20 days).

 cottsway.co.uk/damp

Tips for keeping you and your home safe and healthy



Reduce moisture

- Dry clothes outside when you can. If not, use the kitchen or bathroom with the window open.
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators - use a rack instead.
- Put lids on pans when cooking. Don't boil kettles too long.
- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it vents outside.



Improve ventilation

- Keep a small window or vent open in rooms you're using.
- Close the kitchen or bathroom door when cooking or showering to stop steam spreading.
- Leave some space behind furniture so air can move around the room.



Keep your home warm

- Try to keep your home at around 18-21°C.
- Add insulation and stop draughts if you can.
- Don't use gas or paraffin heaters - they create extra moisture and can be dangerous.

More than three quarters of our rented homes are for social rent, which is around half the cost (50-60%) of renting on the open market. The rest are at affordable rent, which is about 20% cheaper than market rents.

Building more homes, helping more people

We're on track to build around 250 new homes for rent and shared ownership during 2024-25. More than 70 of these have been finished since April.

Councils manage housing waiting lists, and we work with them and private developers to create more homes. The need for affordable housing is huge, with over 25,000 people on council waiting lists in the areas we serve – so it's essential we play our role in providing more new affordable homes.

Latest homes

Work is happening at sites in Brockworth, East Carterton, Highworth, Leckhampton, Malmesbury, Moreton-in-Marsh, Swindon and Tetbury.

We're also redeveloping some of our older sheltered housing schemes in West Oxfordshire, with work ongoing in Woodstock and on the way in North Leigh.

Over the summer, customers moved into new homes on the site of an old 1950s housing scheme in Chipping Norton. The new homes are named Magpie Court, after the local football club.

Development Manager Marissa Yeoman says: "It's a big improvement on the homes previously there and all the new homes are for social rent – this is the cheapest rent option available. They have solar panels and air-source heating, and the car park has electric vehicle charging points and there's a long-term plan to help wildlife there too."



Rent and service charges 2026-27

From April 2026, most rents for our social and affordable homes will go up by 4.8%, following government rules.

If you pay service charges, these might change too.

We'll contact you with more information about your rent and service charges (where these apply) early in the new year.

For our shared owners, rent changes will depend on the terms of their lease.

Getting help

We know that any increase in bills can affect your household budgets - if you are struggling, or worried about how to pay your rent, please contact us.

Where your rent goes

As a not-for-profit organisation with rising costs impacting how we work, the rent you pay us helps ensure we deliver services that we're relied upon for - from maintaining your homes and investing in your neighbourhoods to building new, affordable homes.



Your voice matters



“ Hello, I’m Anne McLoughlin. I joined the Board in September and will officially become Chair next spring, taking over from the wonderful Andrew Hall when he completes his time with Cottsway after seven dedicated years.

The Board’s job is to set the vision and strategy for Cottsway and ensure that we meet national housing and regulatory standards, including managing finances responsibly and listening and acting upon your feedback.

Over the past few months, I’ve been getting to understand life at Cottsway, meeting customers including the Scrutiny Group (who helped pick me for this role) and staff too. I’ve worked in social housing my whole career, from helping people with welfare benefits to leading organisations and sitting on other boards – I’m somewhat of a social housing nerd! I believe everyone deserves a decent, affordable place to call home where they are respected.

Being part of a housing association means working together in partnership with customers and your voice matters. So, if you have any ideas, we’re all ears - and I’m looking forward to visiting more homes and getting to meet more of you. ”



What we do with your feedback

Our Deputy Chief Executive Sue Lakin sits on staff and Board groups that regularly review all customer feedback and complaints. She explains;



“ Your feedback shapes everything we do. We listen through surveys, focus groups, compliments, and complaints to understand what’s working and where we can improve.

An independent research company also runs regular phone surveys to help us understand how happy you are with our services. This is part of the national Tenant Satisfaction Measures and most of our latest annual scores were among the highest in England – but we don’t just focus on the positives.

We delve deeper and do things like follow up directly with you if you give negative feedback. We also check in with customers after key services, like moving in, repairs, or reporting anti-social behaviour, to see how things went.

Thank you if you’ve shared your views - every comment helps us make positive changes. ”

What difference does your feedback make?

Throughout this newsletter we’ve included some of our latest annual Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) results with examples of improvements made - and a snapshot of our annual results for 2024-25 on page 15.

You can explore even more, such as our annual TSM report and updates on service improvements, on our website.

 cottsway.co.uk/publications

We also publish results from quarterly TSM surveys:

 cottsway.co.uk/TSM

Holding Cottsway to account

“ I’m Vanda, that’s me in the middle of the photo. I’ve lived in a Cottsway home since 2006 and I’m the Chair of the customer Scrutiny Group.

This is a small team of tenants who work together to scrutinise Cottsway’s work and make recommendations that we believe will bring improvements for you.


Our job is simple but important - we help shape the decisions that matter most, working closely with Cottsway staff and its Board.

Since I joined in 2017, I’ve seen how our feedback has led to real improvements - like clearer communication, better services, and policies that focus on what customers really need.

There are currently five of us in the group, and together we have over 50 years of experience as

Cottsway customers. We’re in the process of filling the recent vacancy and look forward to welcoming a new member soon.

You don’t have to be a Scrutiny Group member to help hold Cottsway to account. Just sign up to our mailing list so you can share your thoughts and ideas when we’re reviewing services. ”

 cottsway.co.uk/scrutinygroup



Steph

“ I started my career as a nurse, then followed my passion for dogs into care, training, and judging for the Royal Kennel Club.

Joining the Scrutiny Group lets me give back, share my perspective, help improve services, shape policies, and connect with others making a positive difference. ”

Gill

“ Joining the group has been a great experience. With Cottsway’s support and training, I’ve attended conferences, workshops, and met other groups across England.

Most meetings are now online via Teams, making it easy to join. We meet fortnightly, with every third meeting in person at Cottsway’s Witney offices. ”

Carole

“ I like asking the questions that ensure Cottsway’s services meet tenants’ needs.

We’re currently reviewing the tenancy-ending process, gathering customer feedback and meeting staff to find improvements. Once finished, we’ll share our recommendations so real, positive changes can be made across the organisation. ”

Maggie

“ I actually used to work as a Community Network Officer at Cottsway. During my time working there I also helped create D.I.T.T.O (Doing It Together To Overcome), - a group supporting disabled and vulnerable people, now run by ICE Witney.

I like to use this experience to promote accessible, inclusive services for everyone. ”

Tenant Satisfaction Measure annual results (2024-25) – snapshot

Between May 2024 and February 2025, we spoke to 1,040 customers living in our affordable rented homes. The survey included a mix of tenants across different areas, property types, and backgrounds.

A rundown of what you said – satisfaction scores



85%
of you told us
you're satisfied
with our services
overall



87%
satisfied with
repairs service
(past 12 months)



85%
satisfied with time
taken for last repair



86%
my home is well-
maintained



89%
my home is safe



74%
Cottsway listens to
my views and acts
on them



85%
Cottsway keeps
me informed about
things that matter
to me



88%
Cottsway treats
me fairly and with
respect



42%
satisfied with
Cottsway's
approach to
complaints handling



68%
satisfied that
communal areas
are kept clean and
well-maintained



77%
Cottsway
makes a positive
contribution to my
neighbourhood



69%
satisfied with
our approach to
handling anti-social
behaviour

We're really pleased that most of you feel safe in your homes and value the way we treat and communicate with you. We know there's more to do, especially on communal areas and complaints handling.

You'll see on page 4 some of the work we're doing on estate inspections and communal areas.

When it comes to complaints, our scores were higher than most other landlords, but we're working to improve and we've already taken steps. This includes making it easier for our team to share complaints cases evenly and managers monitoring callbacks to you, so you get faster responses and a better service.

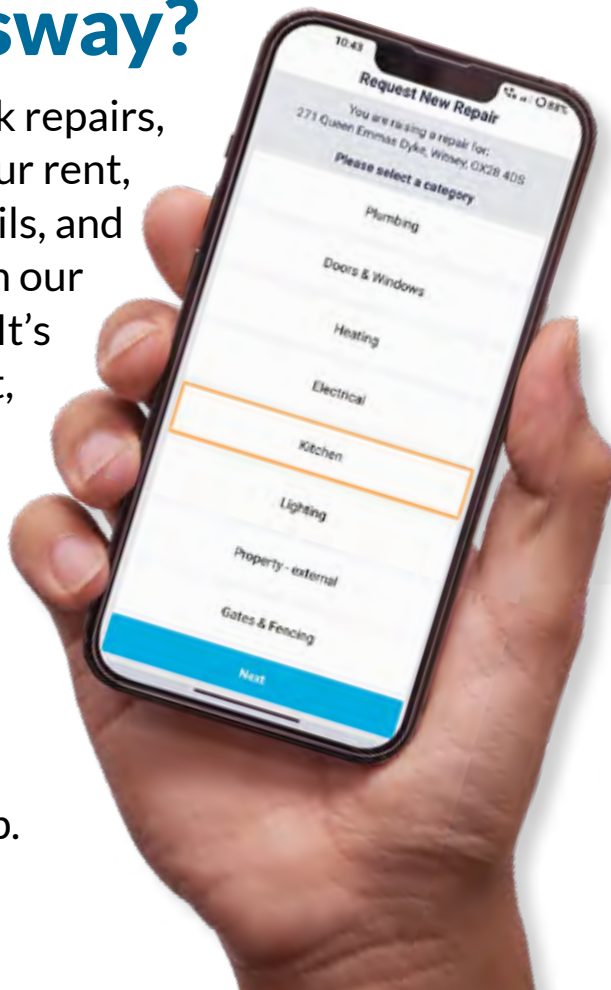
Are you signed up to My Cottsway?

Request and track repairs, pay and check your rent, update your details, and more - all through our customer portal. It's quick, convenient, and available anytime!



Register and download the app.

 cottsway.co.uk/mycottsway



Suspect tenancy fraud?

With so many people in need of affordable housing, it's vital that our homes are used by those in genuine need. If someone is living in a property that they're not legally entitled to, this is tenancy fraud.

We work with local authorities and other agencies to investigate tenancy fraud, but we also rely on information from members of the community. If you suspect someone is committing tenancy fraud, please let us know - all information is treated in the strictest confidence.

 cottsway.co.uk/fraud

“
If you suspect someone is committing tenancy fraud, please let us know.”

Give feedback or complain

Whether we've done something well or not so well, we want to hear from you.

You can share your thoughts in whatever way works best for you - online, by phone, email, social media, letter, or in person. Our contact details are listed here.

If you prefer, you can also contact the independent Housing Ombudsman Service anytime to discuss your concerns.

Contact us

Our reception area is open for pre-arranged appointments only, but we're here in other ways if you need to reach out and can visit you at home if needed.

Visit: cottsway.co.uk/contact

Email: contact@cottsway.co.uk

Call: 01993 890000

By post: Cottsway House, Heynes Place, Avenue Two, Witney OX28 4YG



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instagram.com/cottswayhousing



linkedin.com/company/Cottsway

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