

Our community services

This booklet sets out the ways we can support you and your family while you live in your Cottsway home



Help with your tenancy

cottsway.co.uk/welfare

We want you to have a successful tenancy with Cottsway that enables you to be secure in your home.

Tenancy support

If you, or a Cottsway customer you know, are struggling to cope day-to-day, or you're in a crisis and are worried about the impact on your tenancy, we can help you maintain your tenancy, so please get in touch.

We can assist with a wide range of housing problems and work in partnership with various external agencies to get you the support you need, for example social services, Citizens Advice, SSAFA (the Armed Forces charity), occupational therapists, GP's and Age UK.

Pre-tenancy support

If you're new to Cottsway and need help to get your tenancy off to a good start, or to get set up in your new home, your housing officer may refer you for one-to-one pre-tenancy support. These sessions take place in-person or over the phone and are available for three months.

We know that care leavers can find it particularly hard to adjust to managing a new home and tenancy. To help care leavers get established in their new homes we can offer up to six months one-to-one support.

Tenancy ready workshop

Our online workshop is aimed at new customers who have not held a tenancy agreement before or would just like to know more about their, and Cottsway's, role and responsibilities. The online session is held once a month and lasts for about an hour.

Charitable funding

We can also apply to charities on your behalf to help provide you with funding to buy household items for example a cooker, white goods, a mattress or flooring. Each charity is different in what they offer and who they can help, but there are lots of resources out there and we can look to find the one that could meet your needs.

Please note: Pre-tenancy support is only available via a referral from your housing officer.

Help for you and your family

We provide a range of services to help you and your family and often work with partners to make sure we can give you the best help and support.

Citizens Advice

citizensadvicewestoxon.org

0808 2787908

Cottsway work in partnership with Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire and all Cottsway customers, regardless of where you live, can contact this branch of Citizens Advice for free, independent and confidential advice on a wide range of issues such as debt, welfare benefits, housing matters, consumer rights, court proceedings, child support maintenance and employment.

Community Fund

cottsway.co.uk/fund

We offer funding for community projects and personal development through the Cottsway Community Fund and are proud to be making a difference in our community and welcome applications.

This year a total of £30,000 is available through our Community Fund. This is accessible to both individual Cottsway customers* and new and existing groups and projects.



Coaching and mentoring

 cottsway.co.uk/coaching

If you're dealing with a change in work circumstances, you could benefit from coaching and mentoring to help you learn new skills, build confidence and get back on track.

The sessions are led by an independent consultant specialising in employment support and mental health issues and we offer free coaching and mentoring to:

- Provide confidential, dedicated one-to-one support (up to 18 hours), either over the phone or online, and unlimited email encouragement.
- Help you set goals to improve your circumstances. This could include updating your CV, preparing for interviews, looking at how to enhance your existing skillsets or developing a better understanding of the financial support available to you.

Easy Move scheme

 cottsway.co.uk/movinghome

If you currently live in one of our properties and it's larger than you need, we may be able to help fund your move to a smaller Cottsway home via our Easy Move Scheme.

Successful applicants will receive a £2,500 grant to help towards costs such as removal services, skips, new carpets, the first month's rent and any recharges incurred at the former property.

If you choose to downsize because your request to install aids and adaptations at your current home has been denied, you may also be eligible for an additional £1,000 grant support.

To ensure that we help those most in need of support we will:

- Prioritise applications from those most affected by the Government's spare room subsidy, or who have been refused permission to aids and adaptations in their current home.
- Not accept applications from those with savings in excess of £5,000.

Food banks

Cottsway are able to refer you a food bank wherever you live. We can refer you to any Trussell Trust food bank plus a wide range of independent local food banks so if you need help, please get in touch.

Furniture reuse scheme

Supported by our partners Travis Perkins Managed Services, our furniture reuse scheme offers free second-hand furniture and white goods to Cottsway customers in need. Please contact us for more details.

Help with decorating and gardening

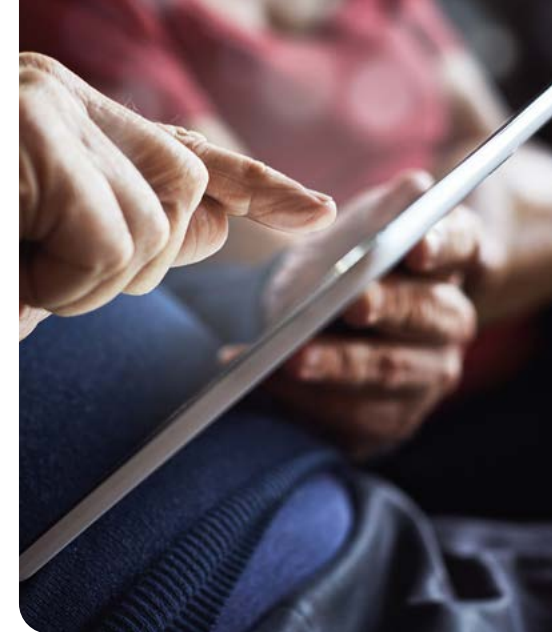
 cottsway.co.uk/welfare

We may be able to help with decorating your home and maintaining the garden if you have a disability or are over the age of 70.

You can apply for help if:

- You receive housing or disability benefit; and
- Do not have someone aged between 18 and 60 living with or near you and able to do the work.

There are some restrictions and places on these schemes are limited, but if you need help get in touch to find out more.



Tablet and laptop loan scheme

 cottsway.co.uk/tabletloan

Cottsway customers without online access can benefit from our tablet and laptop loan scheme.

We provide access to training and can loan you equipment such as a laptop or tablet and wi-fi dongle for the long-term to help you get online. These can be used to access our online services, build digital skills and keep in touch with friends and family.

In the community

We want to make a positive contribution to your community and your neighbourhood. To help do this we provide a variety of activities and opportunities that you can ask us to deliver in your area.

Community clear-up days

cottsway.co.uk/cleanup

Community clear-up days give you and your neighbours the chance to tidy up the area where you live and get rid of unwanted items. Getting together with your neighbours can also help you meet new people, discover new friendships and develop community pride in where you live. We'll publicise your event locally, provide skips, a risk assessment and safety equipment, plus lots of practical support on the day.



Community planting days and improving biodiversity

cottsway.co.uk/groundsmaintenance

If you'd like an area of Cottsway-owned and managed land in your neighbourhood to look better and to be more biodiverse, we can spend the day with you to help improve the area by providing plants and bulbs, bird boxes and bug hotels.

We also work with our grounds maintenance contractor to identify grassy patches that could become wildflower areas.

Partnership working

Through our Community Fund we support a wide variety of projects that in-turn provide opportunities for Cottsway customers and their families, such as learning support projects in schools.

We also attend a range of partnership meetings to make sure we are working together and can support and promote the projects our partners are working on.

Customer involvement

There are loads of ways you can give us your views on Cottsway, from simply completing a survey, all the way through to helping us procure new services and scrutinise existing ones.

Customer satisfaction surveys

cottsway.co.uk/performance

We run a host of satisfaction surveys to monitor how well the services we deliver are meeting customer's needs. Most are carried out over the phone by Acuity, an independent research company. This means practically everybody can have their say if they want.

We follow up on all comments that require a response or further action, and publish a range of the results online so you can see how we're doing. Most surveys also include a prize draw so you could win a giftcard (or have money paid off your arrears) if you take part.

Survey testing

You can also sign-up to test our in-house surveys to make sure they make sense and ask the right questions, although you will need to be online to do this. Contact us for more details.

Procurement group

We frequently procure new suppliers and really value the input of a small group of customers who work alongside staff to set service standards, shape tender specifications and then select the winning contractor. Training and support are available. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch.

Resident associations

We support residents' associations in the areas where we have homes. We can offer help and advice and also provide start-up funding for new associations and annual maintenance grants worth £150 per year for qualifying groups. If there's a local issue you'd like to work on with your neighbours, or if you just want to organise events to promote community spirit then a residents' association might be for you.

Scrutiny Group

 cottsway.co.uk/scrutinygroup

If you live in a Cottsway home and are interested in working with us to make a real difference, you might want to consider joining our customer scrutiny group.



As a scrutiny group member, you would be part of a team of customers who monitor performance, identify improvements and bring about change.

If joining the Scrutiny Group isn't your cup of tea, you can still help them with their work by signing up to Scrutiny Assist. This is simply a mailing list that gives the Scrutiny Group permission to contact you for your views. Sign up now at: cottsway.co.uk/scrutinyassist

 For more information about our approach to engaging customers, read our Customer Engagement Strategy: cottsway.co.uk/publications

Did you know that as a Cottsway customer you are able to join TPAS?

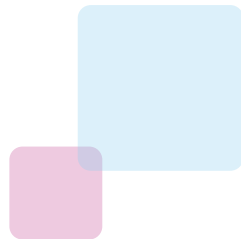
 tpas.org.uk

TPAS are the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and they have loads of great resources, workshops, webinars and courses that are available to you as Cottsway customers.

TPAS membership is free and their training is often free to our tenants, but we may be able to help where there is a charge.

For a full list of courses and how to become a member, see the TPAS website.

As a member you can also access advice and information on setting up your own residents' group – and we can help with practical and financial support for this too!



Supporting young people

We know young people have plenty of challenges to face and often need all the help they can get to build their skills and confidence. To help with this we provide resources in schools and are members of Oxfordshire Youth. Young people are also able to apply to our community fund for a grant of up to £250 to support their learning and skills development.

Bursaries

When travel and equipment are required to take part in a course or activity, we may be able to provide a bursary to make sure these opportunities are available and a lack of funds won't hold anyone back.

Childrens' Safety Education Foundation

Every year we sponsor resources in local schools to provide students with additional resources. In recent years we've focused on their 'Money-Wise' programme to encourage financial literacy from a young age.

Growing Ambitions

We have access to 'Growing Ambitions', a week long work experience opportunity with a leading Oxford based law firm each July. This gives four young people, aged 16-18, five days work in various departments, as well as attending court and really shows them career opportunities they may not otherwise discover.

Oxfordshire Youth

We're members of Oxfordshire Youth and can help young people access the opportunities they offer including their Young Leaders course for 14-21 year olds which leads to a Level 2 Award in Leadership and Team Skills.

Keeping in touch

There are lots of different ways you can keep in touch with us and keep up to date with our latest offers, events and activities.


Our website

 cottsway.co.uk

See our website for the latest news and everything to do with your home and our services. Here you will find information on:





- Community events and activities.
- Customer Charter, setting out the standards of service you can expect.
- Employment support including coaching and mentoring.
- Getting online, including training and our laptop and tablet loan scheme.
- Grants through our Community Fund.
- How we are performing.
- Rents and services charges.
- Support if you're suffering domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour.
- Your tenancy agreement.



 **Not online?** If you'd like more details about any of our services, or the information included in this booklet, please call 01993 890000.

Social media

Follow us on social media for all our latest news:

-  facebook.com/Cottsway
-  twitter.com/cottsway
-  linkedin.com/company/cottsway
-  instagram.com/cottswayhousing

Or join our customer-only Facebook group to share your ideas with each other and our Communities team on anything to do with your homes and neighbourhood.

Here you can also read about the Community Fund applications we receive and vote on who should get funding:

-  facebook.com/groups/cottswaycommunities

Join our mailing list

 communities@cottsway.co.uk

If you're online and have an email address, you can sign up to 'Cottsway Connect,' our quarterly e-zine which features a brief round-up of news and activities. The ezine also contains links to the support, upcoming events, surveys and opportunities we are supporting.

Homepage

 01993 890000

Our twice-yearly newsletter called 'Homepage,' is sent to all our customers via email. If you are not online and would like to receive a paper copy delivered to your door, please give us a call and we'll add you to our Homepage mailing list.

 **Help us to stay in touch by email and text:** update your contact details at: cottsway.co.uk/updatedetails




Register **NOW** for My Cottsway

Use our online customer portal any time of day to:

- Make a payment with your credit or debit card - you can also save your card details for speedier future payments if you chose to.
- View your rent balance, transaction history and other charges.
- Set up a new Direct Debit.
- Update your contact details.
- Download and print your statements (via your computer, laptop or tablet only, not the app).

Register at:

 cottsway.co.uk/mycottsway; or

 Via the My Cottsway app on your smart phone
available from Google Play and the App store



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