



Annual report to tenants 2010

Medway Council Housing Services

Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You

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Introduction



Welcome to our first tenants' annual report

On the 1 April, 2010 the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) became the regulator for all social housing landlords, including councils which own their own stock, like Medway, and registered social landlords, the majority of which are housing associations.

This report has been produced in conjunction with Medway tenants to inform you of the areas you have told us to prioritise during 2010/11 and to tell you how we are doing in each area. We will also advise you how we will develop our **local offers** with you.

Medway Council's housing stock consists of 3,056 tenanted properties, plus 196 leasehold properties. We want to ensure that every tenant is able to have a say and input on the services we provide.

Your views and feedback are essential to ensuring that we adapt our services to your needs and requirements. We welcome your feedback.

What this report is about:

The aim of this report is to:

- inform you how we are going to tailor our services to ensure that we meet the national standards set out by the Tenant Services Authority;
- listen to your views and opinions when setting up, changing or removing any of our services, policies or procedures and providing you with feedback on how your views have influenced how we provide services;
- provide you with clear information on how Medway Council is performing against other local social housing providers;
- tell you where we do not meet the TSA requirements and what we are doing to address those weaknesses;
- explain about local offers, which will ensure that our services are tailored to the requirements of Medway customers;
- give you a better understanding of the services that Medway Council provides.

The **TSA** has set us five national standards that we need to report on to you. They are:

- 1 *tenant involvement and empowerment;*
- 2 *home;*
- 3 *tenancy;*
- 4 *neighbourhood and community;*
- 5 *value for money.*

To ensure that we are tailoring our services to your requirements, we have consulted a range of tenants about the standards. We have met formally with our tenant forums and asked them about the services we are delivering and conducted tenant surveys. We have also carried out a strengths and weaknesses exercise with our principal tenants' group taking its feedback on what we do well and what needs improving against the standards.

We also have a service improvement plan in place which we use as a tool to improve our services and we report progress to our main tenant forum MeRGe.

In August we also appointed an independent consultant to review the resident involvement service and a number of meetings have been held with tenants to look at how the service works and how it might change in the future.

To give a realistic picture of how we are doing in relation to similar organisations in our region we are using the results of a report produced by the independent organisation Housemark, based on surveys, other organisations performance data and cost information for the financial year 2009/10 and published in September this year. The information has been used to compare Medway's performance with that of 15 other similar-sized social landlords in south-east England and London. This information can be used to compare our performance nationwide.

How this report has been produced

To make sure that we included the information that you wanted to know about, we spoke to customers at a number of forums. We also asked for your views in the spring edition of *Housing Matters*, our quarterly tenants' newsletter. We provided a postcard for all tenants to provide feedback on existing services to tell us what they felt needed improving or additional services they would like to see introduced.



We have used this feedback to help us consider how services could be adjusted or improved in the future and have used your feedback to show what we do well and what you have told us we need to do better.

Once we had consulted with customers to ensure that they were happy with the contents of the report and performance information included, it was formally signed off and agreed by the chair of Medway Residents' Group (MeRGe).

Developing local offers

Local offers ensure that you are offered choices in the housing service you receive and decide from those choices what your local housing service will look like. It may be agreed that local is the council area or a part of it, such as a neighbourhood or estate; or it may be defined as a particular element of the service, such as sheltered housing or flatted property rather than street property.

Examples of things that could be considered local offers are:

- Medway Council and tenants agreeing different target response times for routine repairs in a given area or for a specific section of council tenants;
- tenants having the ability to choose a time to have work done, which fits in with their other commitments;
- the joint setting of priorities for neighbourhood improvements between the council and local residents.

In this report we set out our proposals for local offers in Medway. These have been identified with tenants, using feedback from independent reviews and weaknesses we have identified in our performance against the five TSA standards. Over the next few months we will work closely with tenants to ensure our local offers reflect your expectations and are in place by April 2011.

As many tenants of Medway Council may not be aware of what the TSA's standards are in terms of the service they receive, we explain what each of the TSA standards mean for service delivery, as well as telling you where we are in achieving that standard.

Each section of this report sets out one of the TSAs five standards for council housing and explains:

- the outcomes required by the TSA standard;
- the progress we are making in achieving the required outcomes;
- how we compare with other similar housing organisations;
- our plans for further improvement.

How will we tell you how we are doing?

We will be developing an action plan to take forward the areas that tenants have told us need improving. We will report progress with the actions on a quarterly basis to our tenant forums, in the *Housing Matters* newsletter, on our website and in next year's annual report.

We hope you find this report informative and useful. We welcome feedback on the content and layout to help us when we produce next year's report.

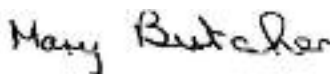
If you have any comments or need any further information, please contact our community development officer on **01634 333201**.



Deborah Upton

Assistant Director of Housing and Corporate Services,
Medway Council

Mary Butcher, Chair of MeRGe, says: This document is important to you as it will explain how much the council needs your input on how you would like to receive the services from your landlord. These are your homes, your communities and we need you to take an active part in how they are run, for example, by being on forums or completing surveys. I have been in tenant participation since the 1990s and have acquired a great deal of knowledge on how the housing service is run. I would encourage more of our tenants to get involved and work with the council to shape the service provided to our requirements.



Mary Butcher
MeRGe Chair



Section 1:

Tenant involvement and empowerment



Tenant involvement and empowerment

This standard deals with:

- customer service, choice and complaints;
- involvement and empowerment;
- understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants.

Customer service, choice and complaints

This requires us to ensure that:

- we provide you with choices, information and communication that are clear and accessible to the diverse needs of all our tenants;
- our complaints process is clear, simple and accessible ensuring that complaints are dealt with promptly, politely and fairly.

What do we do well?

- There are a number of ways to contact us, including email, text messaging, a dedicated freephone number for repairs and five contact points around Medway to enable tenants to speak to staff face-to-face. Our staff each have a dedicated direct dial, so you can call them directly.
- We also provide an out-of-hours service for customers to contact us when repair emergencies occur outside of our standard office hours.
- We publish a wide range of service standards on the web and in printed format, so tenants know what to expect from our services. We monitor delivery against these standards.
- We publish key performance information about how we are doing in our quarterly newsletter, *Housing Matters*, on the web, to our forums and we display the information at our contact points.
- We monitor and publish our performance on complaints monthly via our website and *Housing Matters*.

- We report on performance in relevant topic areas to each of our tenant forums and agree with them periodically what they want covered.
- We have a complaints and a compensation policy which is widely published. Tenants can complain in a variety of ways such as phone, website, in person to officers and in writing.
- Our welcome pack and tenancy agreements set out clearly the responsibilities of tenants and those of the council.
- We report on our performance for complaints responded to on target, to tenant forums and in *Housing Matters* on a regular basis.

What you have told us we need to do better

- We need to provide more feedback to tenants following estate inspections and other events where they have been involved.
- We need to use other information points such as libraries to publicise our services.
- We need to set and meet a service standard for answering and returning customers phone calls.
- We need to review our office opening hours, which are very traditional, with the majority of services only accessible between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Involvement and empowerment

This requires us to ensure that:

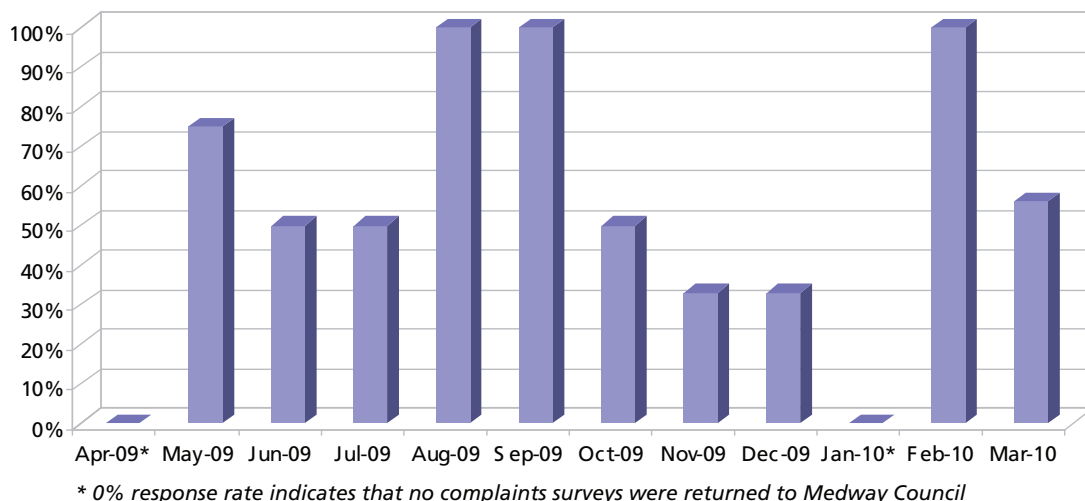
- we provide all tenants with a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their homes and your views and feedback influence existing services, future priorities, housing policy and service delivery;
- we consult with you and provide you with opportunities to agree local offers;
- we provide you with a range of opportunities to influence how the council meets the TSA's standards and to scrutinise our performance against them;
- tenants contribute, oversee and review the development of the annual report;



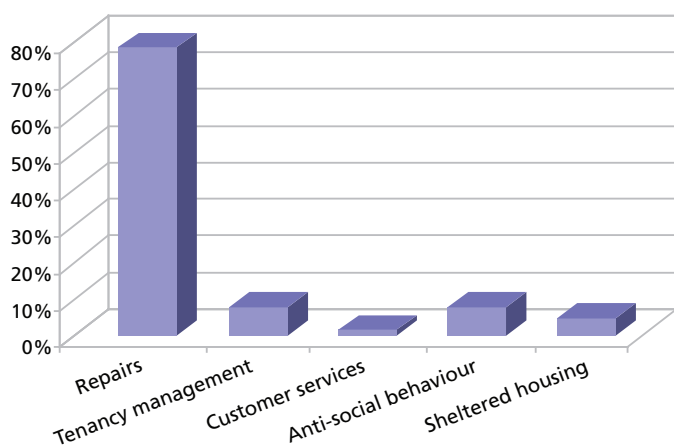
How are we doing?

The following graphs show the performance for complaints of the entire Housing Service.

Overall customer satisfaction with complaints service (April 2009 - March 2010)



Overall percentage distribution for complaints in landlord services by service area (April 2009 - March 2010)



How promptly we respond to your enquires

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Target
Percentage of all housing emails answered in 5 working days	98	99	100	100	98.11	99
Percentage of all housing letters answered within 10 working days	100	100	94.85	98.04	97.56	100

Source: Performance Matters August 2010 - all housing

- we support tenants to build their confidence, to be more effectively involved.

What do we do well?

- We have a dedicated community development officer to support and increase our community development and tenant involvement work.
- We have a resident engagement strategy, which is published and was produced in conjunction with our existing tenants' organisation. It contains an action plan for driving forward tenant involvement

- We have established a People Bank database of residents who have expressed interest in becoming more involved in the service
- In the past year, we have set up a number of forums covering repairs, sheltered housing and caretaking to encourage tenants to become more involved in monitoring performance and shaping service delivery.
- We have reviewed our responsive repairs policy with residents through the repairs focus group and provide monitoring information to their meetings.



- We are recruiting for a housing improvement board – a strategic level scrutiny panel which will include tenants.
- We have a well-established tenants’ group (MeRGe) which has been the focus of our resident involvement service for some time.

What you have told us we need to do better

- Maximise our use of the 800 names in the People Bank to broaden the base of those involved.
- Develop more effective partnerships with other public authorities and organisations like Citizens’ Advice Bureau and other social landlords to deliver more consistent and joined-up services.
- Develop our relationship with Medway Ethnic Minority Forum (MEMF) and other minority group forums to identify how we can better address the needs of black and minority ethnic tenants and potential tenants.
- Build resident engagement into planning and delivery of services; by making time in the planning stage to consult with tenants and their forums and to re-work proposals taking their ideas on board.

Did you know? We are developing a housing improvement board to give tenants greater influence in setting priorities for the housing service, allocating resources, reviewing service standards and monitoring service delivery.

If you are interested in joining please phone **01634 333201**.

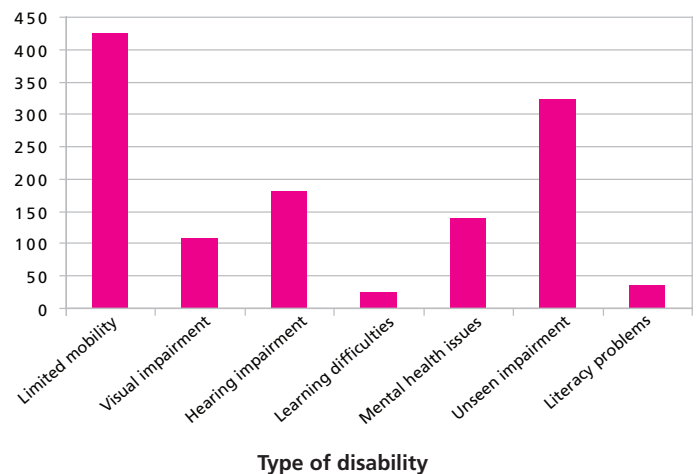
Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

This requires us to ensure that:

- we treat all tenants with fairness and respect;
- we understand the different needs of tenants in relation to the seven equality strands (gender, religion, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and transgender) and address any additional support needs.

To ensure that we tailor our services to our customers’ requirements we have recently asked details about customers’ age, ethnicity and disability in our Getting to Know You survey. We use this information to ensure that our customers are able to access our services. This showed that a large proportion of residents consider themselves to have a disability:

What disabilities do our customers have?



What do we do well?

- All staff have received customer care training. We monitor customer service and the way staff treat customers via feedback and complaints. We use this information to identify further training needs.
- The Getting to Know You tenant profiling survey has been successful, attracting a 60 per cent response rate and adding massively to our knowledge of tenants.
- We have a translation service to allow publications and verbal information to be provided to customers in their first language.



- We initiated a young inspectors' assessment of our lettings arrangements to get a perspective from 16 to 24-year-olds on our processes.
- We can provide written information in various formats to customers, including Braille and large print.
- We have a published equal opportunities policy.
- We carry out equalities impact assessments to consider how policy changes will affect tenants across the equality strands.
- We have a wide range of customer surveys in place which we analyse monthly to ensure we are tailoring our services to your requirements.
- We monitor services to identify whether specific groups are not using our services.

What you have told us we need to do better

- Engage with hard to reach groups more effectively.
- Use Getting to Know You survey data to analyse customer needs.
- Obtain 100 per cent profile information to adapt our services to your needs.

How do we compare

Feedback from the status survey 2008 told us that in all, 75 per cent of Medway Council's tenants were satisfied with the overall service provided by the council as their landlord and 56 per cent of tenants felt the council took their views into consideration when making decisions. In addition, 72 per cent of tenants said they were satisfied that staff were able to deal with their problem.

Source: Housemark report 2009/10.

Our plans for further improvement

We will:

- carry out reviews of standards through the new tenant forums, which are service improvement advisory groups under the new resident engagement strategy;
- continue to recruit members for the housing improvement board, to ensure that residents are involved at the highest level;
- work with Medway Ethnic Minority Forum and young inspectors to find better ways of working with younger people and those from minority ethnic communities;
- launch projects to develop more locally-based residents' groups to work with other social housing providers and local communities to improve services for everyone in the area;
- find ways of increasing the capacity of Medway's tenants to get involved by running training events and encouraging residents to attend national and regional training events and conferences.



Section 2:

The home standard



The home standard

This standard deals with:

- quality of accommodation;
- repairs and maintenance.

Quality of accommodation

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- all tenants homes meet the Decent Homes Standard by 31 December, 2010;
- all homes meet their original standards of design and quality if higher than the Decent Homes Standard;
- ensure that any local offers achieve the Decent Homes Standard as the minimum.

What do we do well?

- Medway is on track to complete work to ensure all its property meets the Decent Homes Standard by 31 December, 2010.
- Medway is developing an asset management strategy to plan future major work to ensure that the Decent Homes Standard is maintained in the council's property and to help us develop our business plan.
- We have engaged representatives from our established residents' group to select major work contractors.

- We have set up an asset management group to include tenants in the long-term monitoring of our properties.

What you told us we need to do better

- We need more effective consultation with tenants on their priorities for future major work.
- We must provide more information to tenants on the agreed programme of work and our progress in achieving it.
- We need to identify ways to offer tenants more choice in the services we provide in areas like caretaking and estate services.
- We need to publicise our capital and planned maintenance programmes.

The chart below shows customer satisfaction levels for major work and cyclical work. Year end 2009/10.

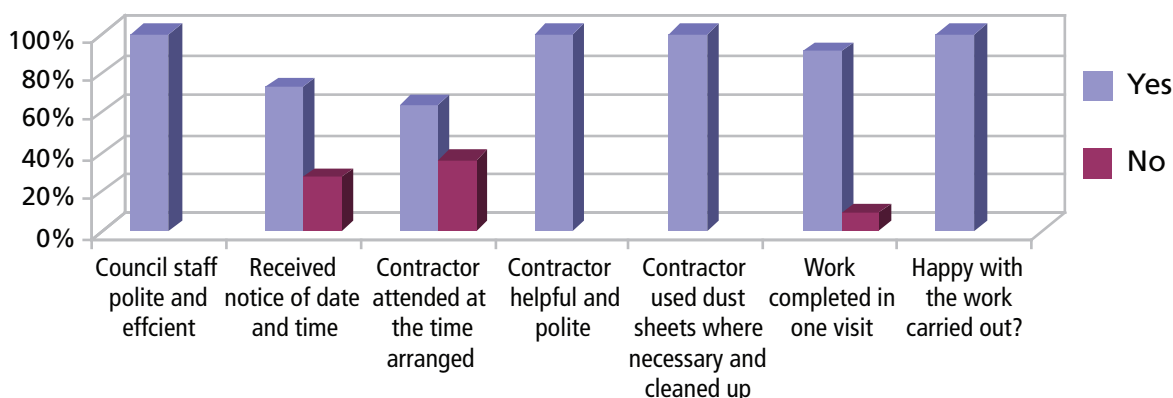
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the general condition of their property.	72%*
Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the quality of their home	77%*
Average SAP** rating of self-contained dwellings at the end of the year (2005)	Index 68.3
The percentage of properties, requiring a landlord gas safety record, that have a valid landlord gas safety record	100%***

* Source 2008 status survey.

** SAP (standard assessment procedure) is a method of calculating energy efficiency for homes.

*** Year end 2009/10.

Mears responsive repairs satisfaction results

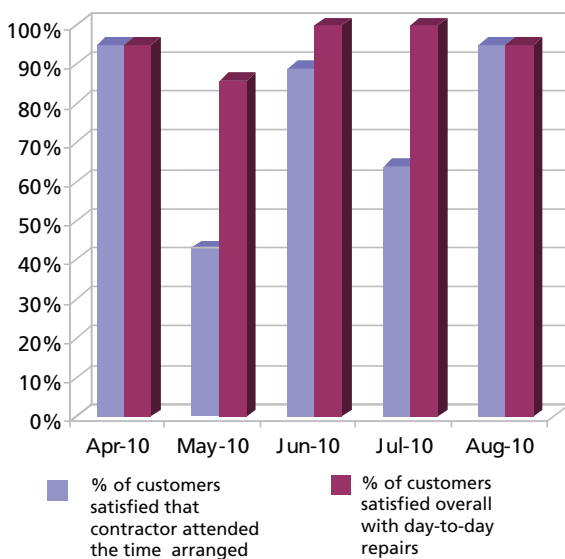


Repairs and maintenance

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- we provide a cost effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas, meeting the needs of and offering choices to tenants, aiming to complete work right first time;
- we meet all health and safety requirements in relation to the occupants of our homes.

Responsive repairs customer satisfaction results *Medway Council conducted surveys - all contractors*



What do we do well?

- Customers sit on responsive repairs and Decent Homes contractor monitoring meetings.
- We achieve effective tenant scrutiny of the repairs service through the repairs focus group.
- We achieve excellent levels of compliance with the gas safety regulations.
- We have set targets with our contractors to complete more repairs right first time and arrangements are being put in place to monitor these, which we will report to you in future editions of *Housing Matters*.
- We have weekly meetings with our contractors to keep better track of our empty properties (voids). We also have a new computer package to assist in monitoring our voids which should assist us in improving our performance.

- We engage representatives of our established residents group in the selection of contractors.

What you have told us we need to do better

- We need to engage more tenants in providing feedback on their experience of the repairs service, by responding to customer satisfaction surveys and other means, to ensure we have a more representative picture.
- We need to work with residents and our main contractor to improve the efficiency of the service to consistently achieve our target response times for routine repairs. We need to improve the balance between work ordered as emergency, urgent and routine repairs to improve service delivery and value for money.
- We need to develop the appointment system for customers of the repairs service.

How do we compare?

In all, 77 per cent of Medway tenants said they were satisfied with the overall quality of their home and 72 per cent were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service. Our average repairs completion time of 11 days for 2009/10 showed a substantial improvement over our 2008/9 performance, but overall we remained in the lower half of our Housemark comparison group.

However, Medway achieved 100 per cent for gas safety inspections and the provision of gas safety certificates to our properties making us joint top of our comparison group.

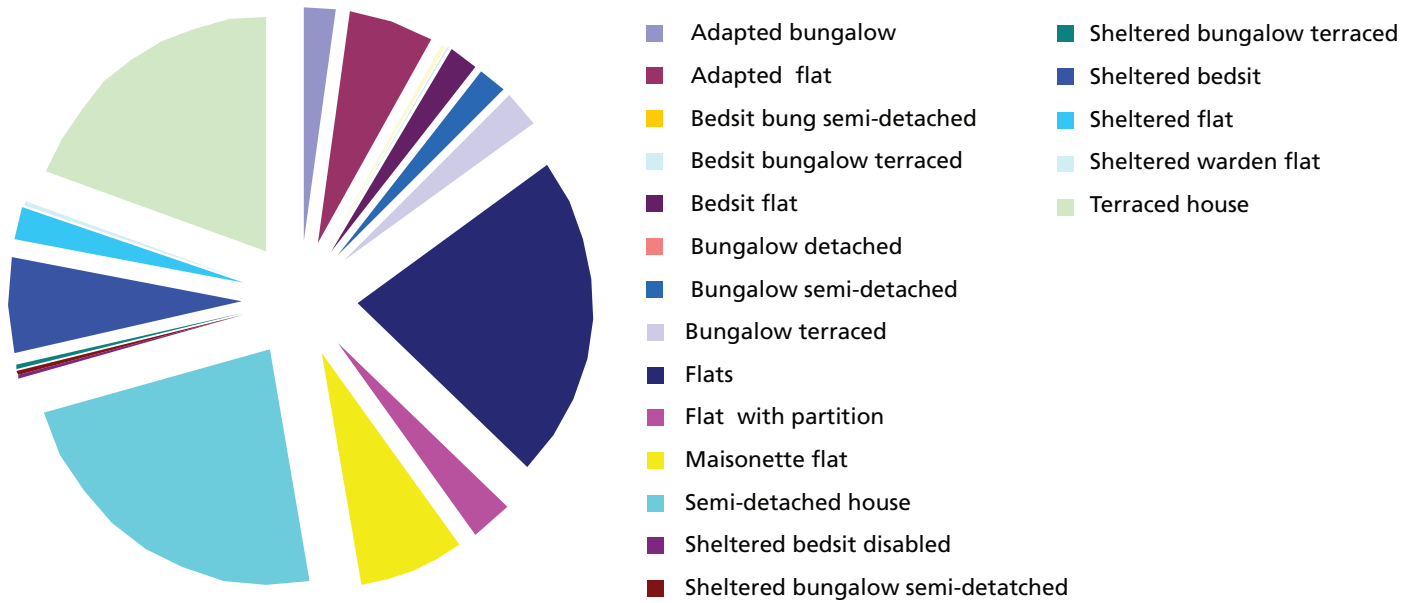
Source: Housemark benchmarking report for Medway Council 2009/10

Plans for further improvements

Did you know? Following your feedback we are looking at ways to improve the rate of return for tenant feedback on the service, to get a more representative picture of how you view our repairs delivery. We are also developing a Medway standard for decent homes work, post December 2010, and allocating dedicated inspectors to defined areas.



% composition of housing stock

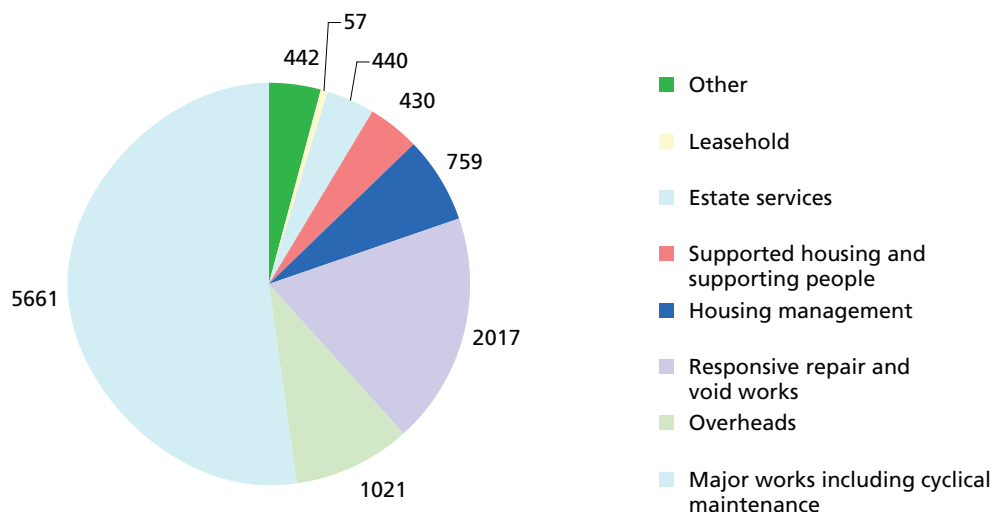


How are we performing - routine repairs for all contractors April 2010 - August 2010

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Our target
Percentage of routine repairs completed on time	95.62	96.12	93.39	91.79	95.79	96
Percentage of out-of-hours emergency repairs completed on time	100	100	100	99	100	99

Source: Housing Revenue Account Performance Information August 2010

The chart below shows how we have spent money on capital major repairs for 2009/10 (£000):



Section 3:

The tenancy standard



The tenancy standard

This standard deals with:

- allocations;
- rents;
- tenure.

Allocations

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- we let homes in a fair, clear and efficient way, taking account of the needs of current and potential tenants;
- we demonstrate that the best use is made of available housing, that the use is well-matched with the purpose of the housing and that the process contributes to the council's planned housing function;
- the application, decision-making and appeals process is clear and easy to access and understand.

What do we do well?

- Medway takes part in the Kent Homechoice scheme, a grouping of 36 social housing providers in Kent, which provides clear, consistent allocations processes across all participating social landlords.
- Homechoice provides applicants with the maximum choice of potential homes across Medway to meet their needs and aspirations.
- Medway also operates a tenants' incentive scheme providing financial incentives for under-occupying households to move to smaller accommodation.
- We have a void management policy which explains a list of financial incentives to encourage tenants moving out of a council home to leave the property in a lettable condition.
- We provide estate specific leaflets for new tenants to ensure they know what is available in their new neighbourhood.

- The allocations policy and appeals process is published on the internet.
- We also manage referrals for Supporting People-funded services, such as floating support.

What you have told us we need to do better?

- A number of the above schemes have been only recently introduced and need to be publicised more effectively. This includes the tenants' incentive scheme for under occupation.
- We need to work more closely with other social landlords to co-ordinate offers of accommodation more effectively.
- We need to reduce the time it takes to repair and re-let our empty properties.

Rents

This standard requires us to ensure that we:

- follow government guidance on setting rents.

What do we do well?

- We are on target to achieve rent convergence and meet government targets in the required timescales.
- We are providing signposting on the council website for debt advice to help tenants improve their money management.
- Housing officers provide a housing benefit verification service to speed up applications and benefit payments to qualifying tenants.
- We provide quarterly rent statements to all our tenants.

What you have told us we need to do better?

- Achieve our targets for rent collection and arrears reduction.
- Introduce a facility for direct debit payments.
- Reduce rent collection costs.



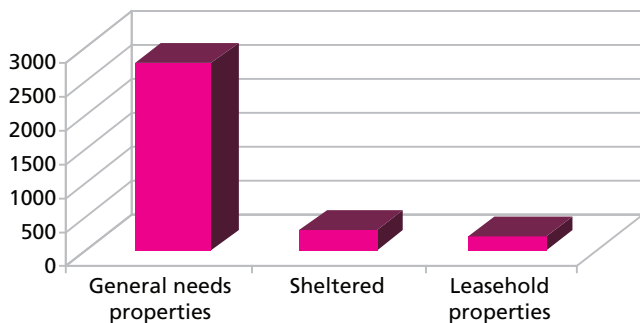
Tenure

This standard requires us to ensure that we:

- provide the most secure form of tenancy compatible with the purpose of the housing;
- meet all relevant legislation in relation to tenancy agreements.

Medway Council's housing stock includes 3,056 tenanted properties and 196 leasehold properties.

Tenure type of our properties



What do we do well?

- Medway has adopted a clear policy of issuing introductory tenancies to all new council tenants in all cases, except where there is a legal obligation to issue a secure tenancy.
- All introductory tenancies are reviewed after 12 months. Unless there are specific reasons not to do so, they are converted to secure tenancies.

What you have told us we need to do better?

- We need to ensure a higher level of tenancy sustainability, so that tenants are supported to remain in their properties longer and deal with any problems, rather than moving on or being evicted.

How are we doing?

The time taken to let our empty properties at an average of 31 calendar days and the amount of rent lost by the council during the period between tenancies as 1.64 per cent (1 April, 2009 to 31 March, 2010) makes us mid-range performers in the Housemark group. Medway also has the highest rate of tenancy turnover among our comparison group with nearly 12 per cent of our tenants moving on in the year.

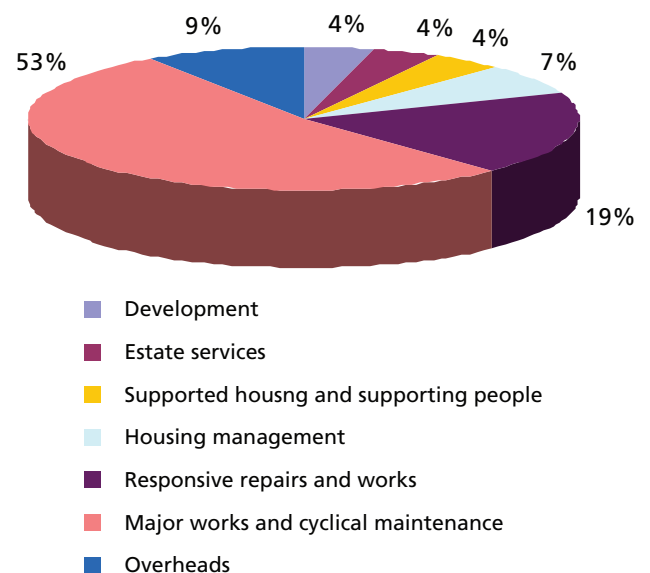
Source: Housemark benchmarking report for Medway Council 2009/10

Plans for further improvement

We will:

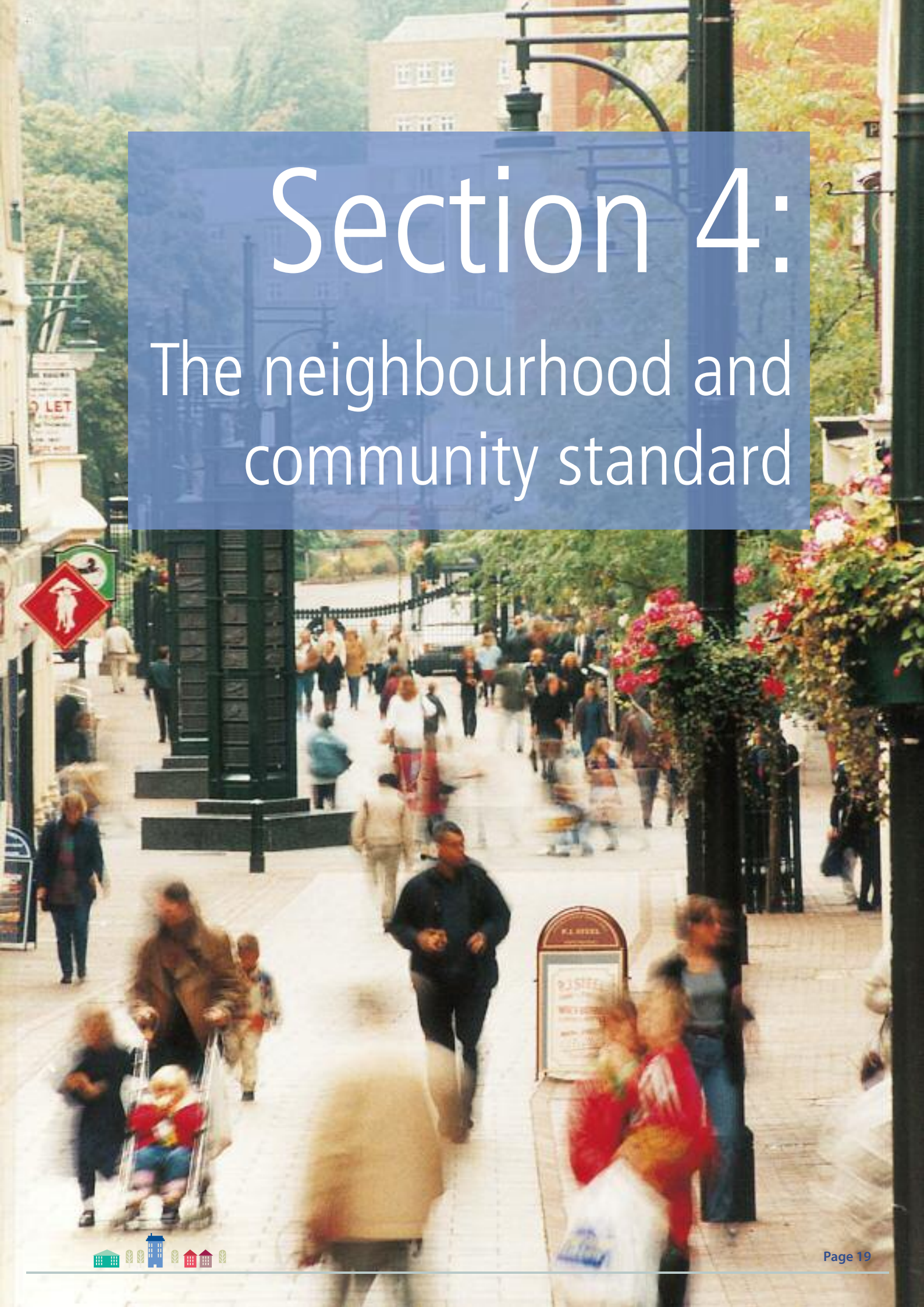
- reduce the re-let time to the target level of 25 calendar days;
- maintain and improve effective working of the allocations and tenancy systems;
- achieve our current targets to deliver improvements in rent collection and tenancy sustainability;
- review our process for re-letting empty properties to improve our performance;
- carry out a review of costs in re-letting our empty properties and meeting our voids standards.

How your rent is spent: Percentage expenditure for 2009/10



Section 4:

The neighbourhood and community standard



The neighbourhood and community standard

This standard covers:

- neighbourhood management;
- local area co-operation;
- anti-social behaviour.

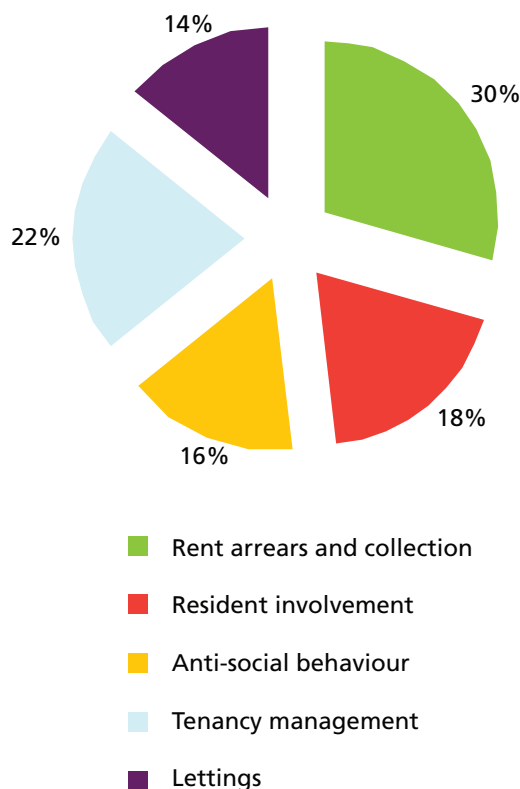
Neighbourhood management

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- we keep communal areas clean and safe;
- we work in partnership with tenants and other bodies to achieve this objective.

The chart below shows how we allocate our spending for our housing management functions.

Total cost for housing management functions - % split



What do we do well?

- Estates with communal areas have dedicated caretaking staff who are known to tenants locally.
- We have introduced more comprehensive estate inspection checklists to ensure all relevant issues are covered in the inspection.
- We are considering offering different levels of caretaking service to reflect the demands of different estates.
- We have agreed with our grounds maintenance contractor that they will visit locations on request to resolve urgent problems.
- We are recruiting tenant volunteers to take on the role of estate champions to monitor caretaking and horticultural standards on their estate.
- We conduct quarterly estate inspections on our estates which have flats.
- We take part in and help Operation Cubit to remove untaxed vehicles from the road.

What you have told us we need to do better:

- Undertake estate inspections on all our estates.

Local area co-operation

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- we co-operate with partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well-being

What we do well

- We are working with MeRGe to support a new community association being formed around our property on Scott Avenue, Rainham. This will include tenants of other social landlords, leaseholders and owner occupiers.

What you have told us we need to do better:

- Develop closer more co-operative working with other partners who have housing stock in our neighbourhoods.



Anti-social behaviour

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- we work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in areas where we own properties.

***Did you know that?** The council is adding an anti-social behaviour module to the computer system. This will enable us to enter and record progress on cases of anti-social behaviour much more effectively and also ensure that staff are aware of the problem, when they visit the area for other reasons. We are also looking at improving our liaison with Kent Police and the Safer Communities Partnership and finding ways to take more of a leadership role in dealing with anti-social behaviour.*

What do we do well?

- We have published our policy on anti-social behaviour on our website.
- We have revised our anti-social behaviour feedback forms to make them easier for you to complete and for us to follow up your feedback by phone.
- We are reviewing our anti-social behaviour policy following your feedback.

What you have told us we need to do better:

- We need to develop new methods to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour and strengthen our ties with other public bodies dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- We need to improve the support available to victims/witnesses to ensure they follow up their complaints with court appearances where necessary.



How do we compare?

The chart below shows how we compare to other housing providers when dealing with cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Housing provider	Number of successfully resolved cases	Number of unresolved ASB cases	Percentage of successfully resolved ASB cases	Customers satisfied with report handling of ASB cases	Customers satisfied with outcome	Direct cost per ASB case
Comparator group results			%	%	%	£
Arhag Housing Association	11.69	6.68	63.64 %	no data	no data	£221.4
Barnet Homes	58.44	no data	no data	82%	88%	£769.4
Brent Housing Partnership	151.22	35.77	80.87%	80%	84%	£291
Canterbury City Council	88.71	18.63	82.65%	71.43%	64.29%	£445
CBHA	116.43	22.14	84.02%	83.3%	75.9%	£507.2
Crawley Borough Council	9.21	6.51	58.59%	no data	no data	£299.8
Eastbourne Homes	1.6	1.87	46.15%	no data	no data	£4714.7
Gateway Housing Association	3.91	9.12	30%	78.95%	68.42%	£1663.7
Hillingdon Homes	34.45	11.03	75.74%	75%	56%	£653.8
Inquilab Housing Association	23.65	10.41	69.44%	68%	68%	£810.9
Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association	22.37	0	100%	no data	no data	£1099.3
Kingfisher Housing Association	34.05	0.84	97.6%	46.4%	38.5%	£501.8
Lewisham Homes	33.41	4.65	87.79%	37%	36%	£400
Medway Council	20.62	1.31	94.03%	83%	83%	£2053.7*
mhs homes	122.64	32.02	79.29%	95.2%	14%	£230.8
Origin Housing Group	16.63	2.45	87.14%	48%	48%	£1184.1

* These costs reflect previous team structure which has been revised as of May 2010 and will lead to a reduction in costs. We will continue to review the delivery of the service to ensure the most cost effective method of service delivery.

Source: Housemark benchmarking report for Medway Council 2009/10



Section 5:

Value for money

Value for money

This standard requires us to ensure that:

- we show you how expenditure has been prioritised in relation to each of the standards, in the delivery of local offers and in meeting other needs such as investment in new social housing provision;
- we show you how we have ensured value for money and how we monitor that we are delivering a cost effective service;
- we tell you our plans and priorities for delivery of further value for money improvements.

What do we do well?

- We have a value for money strategy in place, which is reflected in staff work plans and monitored at appraisal. These link to our overall service delivery objectives.
- Service costs are recorded and benchmarked against other similar social landlords.
- We monitor all areas of the service to identify where we could spend money more efficiently and ensure value for money.
- We have implemented an efficiency tracker to ensure that we obtain best value for money.
- We involve our main tenant forum in budget setting and provide them with feedback from benchmark exercises including costs.

Did you know? In our last STATUS survey, in 2008, 82 per cent of tenants felt that Medway gave good value for their rent

Source: Housemark benchmarking report for Medway Council 2009/10

What you have told us we need to do better

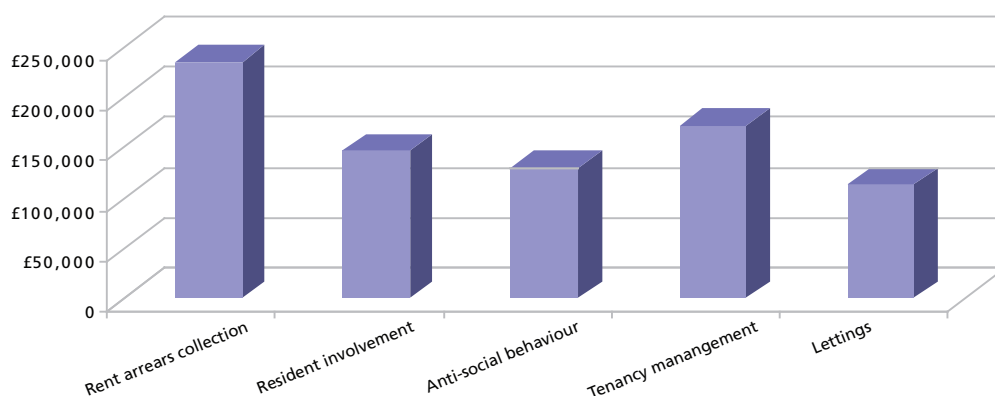
- Ensure we report to you how we have achieved value for money more effectively.
- Find ways to strengthen our value for money culture.
- Develop a performance monitoring system to report to you how we have achieved value for money.
- Involve more customers in prioritising budgets in future years.

Plans for further improvement

We will:

- monitor the recent restructure of the housing management service to streamline services and improve efficiency;
- use our efficiency tracker system to identify how we can perform better;
- encourage staff to suggest ways of improving service efficiency through a new page on the councils internal website;
- publicise more widely our costs and involve tenants in setting priorities.

Total cost of housing management functions



Section 6:

Local offers

Local offers

The idea of providing local offers to meet the needs of local people is essential to ensure that tenants have real input and say about the services that we provide.

We recognise that a one size fits all approach cannot succeed when tailoring our services to your requirements. We are developing local service offers, which reflect tenants' wishes and priorities about the services we provide in your local neighbourhood. As you will have been involved in developing the local service offers with us, we will encourage and support you to feel confident in monitoring and challenging the offers that we put in place.

When we are developing local offers we must ensure that the offer is cost effective, in terms of delivering a better service to you and reducing administration and other costs. Where you have requested an improved service, which cannot be provided within existing budgets, we will need to identify the additional costs involved and offer you the option of paying more to secure the service you want.

What you have told us so far

Following customer consultation the following local offers have been proposed;

Local offer one:

Holding local housing management surgeries, where housing management staff hold a surgery in an agreed location within a local area. You will be consulted on how frequently you would want the surgeries held and what issues you would want the surgeries to cover. We can then ensure that appropriate staff attend surgeries in those areas where you have said you want them and that the surgeries cover issues which you have prioritised.

Local offer two:

Providing you with greater opportunity for involvement within the Resident Engagement Strategy. Through consultation with you we will provide a variety of options for you to become involved, so you can provide feedback at a time and in a manner that is convenient for you. Options for involvement could include forming a tenants' or community association, becoming an estate champion or a street voice or taking part in any of the current or upcoming tenants' forums.

Local offer three:

Developing a Medway Homes Standard to follow on from the Decent Homes' Standard. The council will have completed its Decent Homes programme by the end of 2010.

Local offer four:

Devising with customer groups local packages of work. This could include analysing any capital work that might be due in a particular property or estate and assessing if the work planned to be carried out over the next three years could be conducted in a single period. This would mean a customer would get the next three years work in one go, with only one period of disruption. This would reflect local improvement priorities and allow us to adjust timescales accordingly or complete the works to the whole street in one go.

Local offer five:

Reviewing with customers groups the caretaking service to each Medway estate, to focus on your concerns and prioritise resources to meet them, providing a service tailored to the preferences of the tenants on that estate.

Local offer six:

Widen our programme of estate inspection conducted for street areas and tailor our service to local needs.

What happens next?

This annual report plan is important because it sets out what tenants have said they would like Medway Council's Housing Services to do. This report outlines our commitment to ensuring that you have the opportunity to be involved in making sure that we set local offers that are meaningful to you and that we report against them in the annual report to tenants in 2011.

We will keep you up-to-date with our progress through our newsletter *Housing Matters*, forums and on our website www.medway.gov.uk.



We need your feedback...

We need your help to write next year's annual report – could you improve on this? Please get in touch on the details below.

If you would like to give us any feedback about any aspect of our service, or to find out more about resident involvement, please phone Katherine Clark on **01634 333201** or email **tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk**.



Annual report to tenants 2010

Medway Council Housing Services

Who to contact



Customer services: 01634 333333 8am to 8pm (Mon-Fri) 9am to 1pm (Sat)
Please note: Calls to customer services may be recorded or monitored for security and staff development purposes.



Housing Services, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR



Email: housing@medway.gov.uk Web: www.medway.gov.uk



Minicom: **01634 333111**



This information can be made available in other formats from **01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring **01634 335577**

বাংলা	331780	ગુજરાતી	331782	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	331784	کوردی	331841	أروو	331785	Русский	332374
中文	331781	हिंदी	331783	Polski	332373	একুশফন্দ	331786	فارسی	331840	Lietuviškai	332372