

Housing Service Standards

Medway Council Housing Services is committed to providing excellent customer service by putting customers at the centre of everything it does.

Housing Services have set out a range of service standards so you know what to expect from us and in return what we expect from you.

# Contact

Whenever you contact Housing Services, you can expect us to adhere to the Councils Customer Charter

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/information/contactus/complaintsandcompliments/easyreadcustomercharter.aspx>

Housing Services will respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests in accordance with Medway Councils FOI process

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/thecouncilanddemocracy/freedomofinformationact.aspx>

Housing Services will respond to complaints in accordance with Medway Councils Complaints procedure

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/information/contactus/complaintsandcompliments/complaintsprocedure.aspx>

# Home visits

When Housing Services visits you at home we will:

* try to arrange appointments that are suitable for you and get to appointments on time. If we need to cancel an appointment we will give you notice, tell you why we had to cancel and rearrange the appointment;
* ensure that our staff and contractors carry and produce a valid identification card. If you are not sure the caller is who they say they are then please contact [Housing Services](http://www.medway.gov.uk/housing/counciltenantsleaseholders/contactus.aspx) before allowing the caller into your home;
* treat your home with respect at all times, but report any signs of illegal activity or abuse to the appropriate authority;
* **not** enter your home if we do not feel it is safe or use your facilities without asking your permission.

In return when contacting Housing Services we expect you to:

* be polite, respectful and not use inappropriate language towards our staff and contractors;
* **not** be verbally or physically aggressive towards any of our staff and contractors *(Medway Council takes a serious view of any aggression towards its staff and will take appropriate action in every case.);*
* be at home at the agreed time for appointments and tell us in advance if you need to cancel an appointment;
* be clear and specific about why you are contacting us;
* give us correct, up to date information and inform us of any change in your family circumstances within **28 calendar days**;
* identify if you are contacting us on someone else’s behalf and provide us with their written permission for you to do this.

# Housing Tenancy Management

The Housing Tenancy Management Team will:

* be present when you view a property that you have been offered;
* provide you with a welcome pack and explain your tenancy conditions when you sign up;
* tell you what you need to know about re-connecting gas and electricity supplies;
* visit you after six weeks to ensure that you are settling into your new home and answer any questions you may have;
* provide information on pest control services;
* investigate suspected abandoned properties within **five working days** and investigate suspected subletting within **five working days**;
* conduct estate inspections on roads where there are ten or more council properties as per the published [timetable](http://cmsstaging.medway.gov.uk/edit/ILINK%7C5063%2C%7C);
* respond to serious anti-social behaviour or neighbourhood nuisance complaints within **two working days** and non urgent complaints within **10 working days**;
* fully investigate any anti-social behaviour or neighbourhood nuisance complaint within **10 working days**. We will not close a complaint until we have spoken or written to the complainant;
* give you written notice of a decision regarding taking over a tenancy within **10 working days**;
* give you a written decision on any mutual exchange application you make within **42 calendar days** of receiving it;
* inform you of our decision on any Right to Buy application you make within **28 calendar days** of receiving all the relevant information or **56 calendar days** if the applicant(s) has had a tenancy with any other landlord which is needed to meet the minimum statutory qualifying period;

The Housing Tenancy Management Team expects you to:

* follow the rules and [policies](http://www.medway.gov.uk/housing/housingpublications/housingpolicies.aspx) set by Housing Services and keep to the rules set out in your [tenancy agreement](http://www.medway.gov.uk/housing/counciltenantsleaseholders/tenantsrights.aspx);
* inform us about abandoned properties you know about.

# Estate Services

The Estate Service Team will:

* carry out our services as published in our Estate [Standard Booklet](http://www.medway.gov.uk/housing/counciltenantsleaseholders/estateservices.aspx);
* remove offensive graffiti within **1 working day** of notification and non-offensive graffiti within **5 working days** of notification;
* remove any dumped items within **5 working days** of being notified and any hazardous material within **1 working day**. If a vehicle has been abandoned, we will notify the team responsible for removing it.

The Estate Service Team expects you to:

* be responsible for cleaning the landing area that is directly outside your property. Where landings are outside, this includes your windows and window sills;
* **not** litter, fly-tip or abandon your property in shared areas;
* dispose of rubbish in the correct way, using rubbish chutes or by storing it in the designated refuse areas between 9am and 7pm on the day of disposal. Do not use chutes between 8pm and 8am as this may cause a noise nuisance for those properties next to them.

# Income Management

The Income Management Team will:

* give tenants a choice of ways to pay rent or service charges;
* send out estimated service charges for the coming year in March and an actual bill for service charges for the previous year in September;
* contact you within **two weeks** if you fail to pay either your rent or your service charges and tell you how much you owe. We will agree a reasonable repayment plan with you and confirm it to you in writing within **five working days**;
* refer you to the council's Welfare Reform Team for general benefit and debt advice;
* take legal action against people who persistently fail to pay their rent or service charge and do not contact us to agree a repayment plan. We will inform people in writing **one week before** beginning legal action;
* ensure that all personal financial information is dealt with in the strictest confidence and that we abide by data protection rules;
* write to tell you what we plan to do **four weeks** before making any changes to your rent or service charge.

The Income Management Team expects you to:

* pay your rent and any relevant service charge in full and on time;
* contact us as soon as possible if you are having a problem paying your rent, service charges or sub account debts;
* make sure that your housing benefit claims are correct and on time and inform us if your benefits or your entitlement to benefits changes in a way that could affect your ability to pay your rent;
* update any direct debit/standing order you have with a bank or building society for your rent and any relevant service charge if the payments change;
* clear any debt that you owe the council before your tenancy ends.

# Leasehold Services

The Leasehold Service will:

* provide you with any new information that will affect leaseholders as soon it becomes available to us;
* include you in any relevant consultation process before carrying out any major, long-term or planned improvement works that will cost you £250 or more. During the consultation we will tell you the value of the contract and which contractor will complete the works;
* include you in any relevant consultation process for long term agreements for goods or services for more than 12 months that will cost you £100 or more;
* ensure you are consulted within the correct legal time-frames; **this can be between one to three months** dependent upon the type of contract awarded;
* carry out all external repair work that is our responsibility to the same timescale that applies to Medway Council tenants;
* **not** carry out any repairs inside your home that are your responsibility under the terms of your lease;
* work with you to understand your service charges, methods of payments and the implications for non-payment i.e. the addition of interest charges; where this is allowed in your lease and legal recovery action.

The Leasehold Service expects you to:

* inform us in writing if you dispute any service charge and continue to pay your service charges in full whilst you are disputing them;
* write to ask us for permission before making any change to your leasehold property (for example, installing a new kitchen or bathroom) or adding any new fixtures/fittings to external walls that you do not own under the terms of your lease;
* inform us of any repairs that the council is responsible for carrying out as soon as possible;
* inform us of any intended sub-letting of your leasehold property, as your lease requires prior permission from Medway Council;
* keep any gas appliances in your property (such as boilers) well-maintained and serviced on an annual basis, through the Gas Safe Register;
* forward us a copy of the annual gas safety certificate for the gas boiler in your leasehold property if you are sub-letting the property;
* keep the interior of your property well maintained and your gardens tidy;
* provide us with a formal notice to transfer within **30 calendar days** of selling your lease.

# Repairs and Maintenance

The repairs and maintenance team will:

* respond to the need for an emergency repair within either **two hours or one working day** depending on severity.
* attend to an emergency repair outside office hours **within two hours** to make sure that no one is in any danger, but will not necessarily complete the repair at that point of time. A follow up visit may need to be arranged by the contractor in order to complete the repair.
* respond to the need for an urgent repair within **three or seven working days** depending on the type of repair.
* ensure that all repairs covered by Right to Repair legislation are completed on time
* respond to non urgent repairs, which do not severely affect your comfort **within 20 working days;**
* tell tenants what priority their repair has been given, together with a timescale for completion, a job reference number and a contact number for enquiries;
* repair any damage to your home caused by our repair work within **10 working days** and remove any debris once work has been completed;
* provide tenants with a short questionnaire so that they can comment on how satisfied they were with the service;
* inspect a sample of completed repairs to ensure they have been done to the right standard;
* inform you if a repair is your responsibility and give you a price for doing the work. We will not start work until the cost has been agreed and we have been asked to go ahead.
* **not** carry out repairs free of charge where we are not responsible for the necessary works or where the damage has been caused by you, your household or a visitor.

When carrying out major works the repairs and maintenance team will:

* phone you to make a survey appointment **within two working days** of being contacted and **seven working days** before carrying out any major repair work.

When dealing with gas appliances the repairs and maintenance team will:

* contact you **two working days** before carrying out a gas service so you can make arrangements to be in;
* service your gas appliances annually and give you a gas safety certificate when we have finished.

The repairs and maintenance team expect you to:

* inform us of any repairs that are needed as soon as possible;
* allow us to access your property for any repairs and the annual gas safety check – this is part of your tenancy agreement;
* make arrangements so that we can access the part or your home where a repair is needed;
* keep all pets and children away from the work area and hazardous equipment;
* inform us if no-one arrives to carry out your repair.

# Void properties

The void service will:

* visit you within **one week** of you giving notice to end your tenancy to identify any repairs that may be required, tell you about having them done and tell you about what you can leave in the property and what you must take with you;
* inspect all empty properties within **one working day** of receiving the keys and keep our empty properties safe and secure from the time we receive the keys to the point at which we re-let them;
* re-let normal properties within our agreed target time and re-let voids that require major repairs as soon as possible;
* ensure that all our properties meet health and safety and empty property letting standards before re-letting them;
* make sure that the gardens of our properties are in a decent and manageable condition before we re-let them;
* tell new tenants in advance about any general or non-urgent repairs that still need to be completed. We will then complete those repairs within **20 working days** of the tenants moving in;
* ensure that all our properties have an electric and (if necessary) gas safety check before we re-let them;
* **not** provide incoming tenants with any carpets or furniture;
* **not** redecorate properties, (a decoration pack may be granted if the property has graffiti or is of generally poor standard).

The void service expects you to:

* pay for any intentional damage to the property;
* leave your property in the condition it was when you moved into it. This includes removing all your belongings and rubbish from both the property and its garden;
* tell the utility companies that you are moving and tell us who your suppliers are;
* arrange for the post office to redirect your mail.