

AUTUMN
2023

Housing Matters.

EXCLUSIVE EZINE

FOR MEDWAY COUNCIL TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS



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Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You

WELCOME TO OUR 'NEW LOOK' HOUSING NEWSLETTER

We hope you find it interesting
and informative.



Welcome from your Chief Housing Officer, Mark Breathwick, our newsletter will be sent out up to four times per year. If you have any feedback or would like to contribute then let us know by emailing: tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk As this is our first edition, then we would be really keen to hear your thoughts!

Over the summer, our officers have been out completing our monthly big door knocks. It has been great meeting so many of you and hearing your feedback about homes and neighbourhoods. We are currently reviewing our tenancy agreements for all secure and

flexible tenancies. If you are affected by this then we will be consulting regarding changes by the end of October 2023, with new agreements starting from 1 April 2024. I look forward to meeting more of you out and about on the big door knocks.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

BIG DOOR KNOCKS

Friday
22 Sep 2023

Beatty Avenue, Cornwallis Avenue, Centenary Gardens, Woodlands Road, Greenview Walk, Sturdee Avenue, Harold Avenue and Toronto Road.

Thursday
19 Oct 2023

Twydall - including Petham Green, Sturry Way, Woodchurch Crescent and surrounding areas

Thursday
23 Nov 2023

Rainham - including Taswell Road, Wakely Road, Suffolk Avenue and Court and surrounding areas



TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES SURVEYS

From 1 April 2023, social housing providers are required to collect data by the regulator for Social Housing as required by the tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints.

The measures are intended to enable residents to scrutinise their landlord's performance and hold them to account and provide a source of intelligence to the Regulator on whether landlords are meeting the regulatory standards.

TSMs will be used alongside other tools to gain assurance from social housing providers. Landlords with a stock of over 1,000 properties will be required to submit this data on an annual basis.

In March we conducted our first TSM surveys and had a great response:

- 2,555 tenant surveys were sent with digital contact details
- We had a 26% response rate

The more responses we get the more influence you will have!

How we have used this feedback:

- Drafted a action plan
- Set up more drop in surgeries
- Carry out monthly Big Door Knocks
- New quarterly newsletter
- What matters to you survey

SUMMARY OF RESULTS



64%	Overall satisfaction
68%	Satisfaction with repairs
66%	Satisfaction with timing of repairs
62%	Satisfaction with home maintenance
65%	Satisfaction that you feel safe at home
46%	Satisfaction that your landlord listens and acts
55%	Satisfaction that your landlord keeps you well informed
64%	Your landlord is fair and respectful
28%	Satisfaction with complaint handling
56%	Satisfaction with communal areas
45%	Satisfaction with your neighbourhood
39%	Satisfaction with landlords handling of anti-social behaviour

OUR NEXT SURVEY



We have commissioned In-House Research, an independent market research company that specialises in the housing industry, to carry out a survey for our tenants.

In-House Research provides tenant satisfaction surveys and many other research services across the housing sector. They also provide benchmarking services, data analytics and customer analysis to improve services and engage with residents across the country. They have been working in the sector for over 25 years.

Who will be contacted?

All of our residents either by phone, email or SMS with the aim of interviewing a wide range of tenants starting in September 2023 – all residents will have an opportunity to respond. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. The caller will introduce themselves as In-House and say that they are working on behalf of Medway Council.

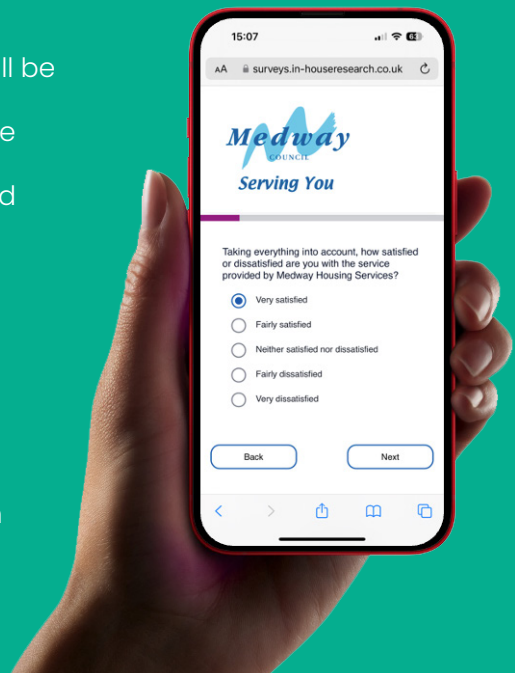
What phone number is displayed?

If you receive a call from In-House, the number displayed will be **01793 680405** which is a Swindon area code. If you call this number back, you'll hear a recorded message that someone from In-House has tried to call to complete a survey, and you will be able to leave a voicemail with a suitable time and date for a call back.

What email address will be used?

Invitations to complete the survey online will be sent from:
MedwayTSM@feedback.inhousersearch.uk

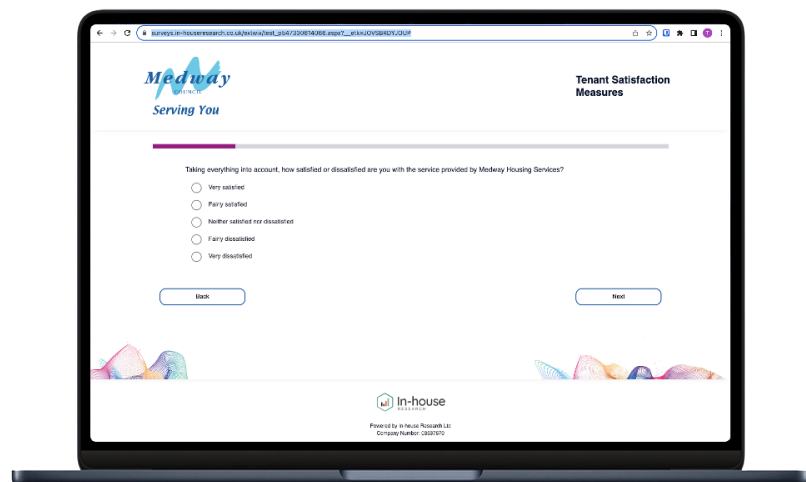
The survey is strictly confidential and residents can request that their feedback is anonymous. All of the data will be reported to the Regulator for Social Housing who will publish the results but will not receive or publish any individual's personal information.



If you have any queries about the survey, please contact Medway Council:
Tenant.Participation@Medway.gov.uk
or In-House Research: **info@inhouse.uk.net**

For more information regarding the text survey service or how to get involved in focus groups to contribute to and influence decisions about the delivery of housing services, please email:
Tenant.Participation@medway.gov.uk

We will publish the results and how we will be using the feedback to improve services that we deliver in a future newsletter.

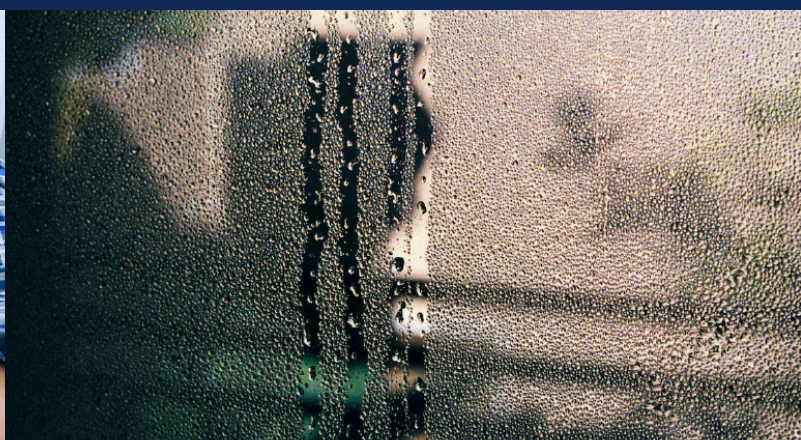


GETTING YOUR HOME READY FOR WINTER



What is damp and mould?

Mould grows on damp surfaces. In most cases it is caused by condensation. This is moist air in the home from things such as cooking and showering – which settles on cold surfaces. Occasionally dampness may be caused by water getting into your home from leaking pipes, blocked guttering or an outside wall which needs repointing. In some cases, it could be a combination of both water egress and condensation.



Spotting the signs

Check your home for:

- Overflow from blocked gutters penetrating around window frames or leaking through cracked pipes
- Rain seeping in where tiles or slates are missing
- Leaking pipes and waste overflows
- Rising damp due to a defective dampcourse or because there is no damp course. Leaks and rising damp often leave 'tide marks'

Helping you keep safe

We want our homes to be safe and will check regularly for any issues. You can help by taking preventative action or letting us know if a problem occurs. If you are experiencing damp, mould or condensation in your home, please contact the repairs team on **01634 333601** or freephone **0800 073 0073**.

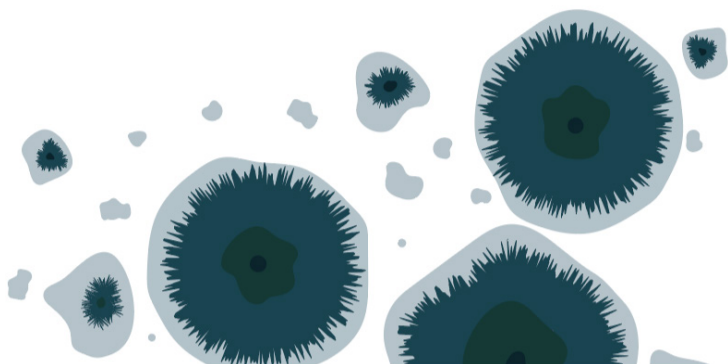
What is condensation

During the colder months, condensation becomes a common problem in British homes. It is caused when warm, moist air hits a cold surface such as a window or an external wall and condenses, running down the cold surface as water droplets. If left, it can develop into black mould which looks and smells bad and can cause health problems.

Look for it in corners, near windows, behind wardrobes, inside cupboards, on the ceiling or in places where there is little movement of air.

How to reduce condensation

- Try to keep the inside temperature relatively constant
- Ensure tumble driers are vented properly
- If your windows have trickle vents keep them open
- Avoid drying clothes indoors
- Don't block air vents/bricks
- Keep the property well ventilated
- Move furniture away from external walls
- Do not disable any extraction units
- Do not supplement your heating with paraffin gas type heating



SCRUTINY UPDATE

Our Resident Scrutiny Panel currently has 11 members who volunteer to represent you as tenants.

The panel plays an active role in the development of services and events for residents. The board meets quarterly with some additional workshops and meetings taking place to discuss specific topics.

Since April the panel have looked at – Pest Policy, Performance Reviews, Tenant Incentive Policy, Our commitments to you and a workshop on current tenancy agreements and proposed changes.

The role of the panel includes:

- Reviewing performance data
- Scrutinising survey feedback and data
- Providing scrutiny and challenge on the improvement plans for services to residents

We are currently looking for an additional member to join the Resident Scrutiny Panel. If you are interested please get in touch by emailing tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk.

As well as the Resident Scrutiny Panel, there are a range of other options if you would like to become more involved with Housing.

MEET THE TEAM

This quarter, meet Rebecca Wilcox the Head of Tenant Services.

Becs joined Medway Council in December 2021 as Development Manager and was appointed in April 2023 at the new Head of Tenant Services.

What does your team cover?

We cover everything to do with people, tenancies and engagement:

- Tenancy
- Income
- Leaseholders
- Right to buy
- Resident Engagement
- Homes for Independent Living
- Estate Services

What is your background?

I'm local authority housing through and through having started my career in 2002 as a Letting Officer at Ashford Borough Council. I've worked across much of housing including lettings, housing options, private sector, development, older persons services and tenancy and income management. I am also a Trustee for the SEC Foundation supporting local projects and community groups across the southeast.

What do you like doing outside of work?

I started running in October 2020, I could barely run 1km and ran my first half marathon in October 2021, I've now completed five! My ambition is to run the London Landmark's Half Marathon, in April 2024.



ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week 2023

Housing Services headed out into the local community with three pop-up events aimed at providing information about anti-social behaviour and the tools we use to tackle it. Events took place in Rainham, Gillingham and Twydall. We were joined by colleagues from Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, Environmental Engagement, The Forward Trust and Victim Support.

The theme for this year's awareness week was 'Know your rights' with a focus on the ASB Case Review. You can find out more about ASB Case Reviews at medway.gov.uk/communitysafety

For more information about how we tackle anti-social behaviour visit medway.gov.uk/housingasb



Summer pop-up events

We were pleased to have had the opportunity to engage with our tenants and the local community at a number of events during the summer holidays. Residents were able to enjoy face painting, crafts and other activities whilst also having the opportunity to engage with a number of services.

We were joined by the Medway Adult Education Team, Medway Environmental Protection and Dog Warden Service, Mears, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue.

We were pleased to support colleagues from our Greenspaces Team with their first Hillyfields Fashion Show event. The event was well attended by local residents and young people who designed outfits and t-shirts before taking to the catwalk. Housing staff engaged with visitors who discussed their views on Housing Services as well as possible improvements for the local area.



CHILD-FRIENDLY MEDWAY



Child-Friendly Medway launched in April 2021 as a platform for children and young people's voices to be heard and responded to. Our aim is to make Medway one of the best places in the country to grow up.

Over the autumn, Child-Friendly Medway have a fantastic mix of free, fun and family-friendly activities and events!

STORYTELLING AND SNACKS

TUESDAYS

10 Oct, 14 Nov, 12 Dec
10.30am-11.30am

Storytelling session, with free snacks available for both children and parents/carers, and a craft activity suitable for 0-5 year olds.

Taking place at Sun Pier House, ME4 4HF.
To register your FREE place, email childfriendly@medway.gov.uk

SOFT PLAY AND STORY CORNER

WEDNESDAYS

20 Sep, 4 Oct, 18 Oct, 1 Nov,
15 Nov, 6 Dec, 13 Dec
Session 1 – 10am – 11am
Session 2 – 11am – 12noon

Soft play equipment, with other toys such as bikes and balls, alongside colouring activities and our story corner. Suitable for ages 0-5 years old.

Taking place at the Pentagon Shopping Centre (next to Wilko), ME4 4HY.

To register your FREE place, please visit Pentagon Shopping Centre CFM Event
Please be aware booking will be available a week before each date.

MINI NUCLEUS

EVERY THURSDAY

10pm – 12noon

Messy art play session for 0-4 year olds, experiencing different textures and materials.

Taking place at Nucleus Centre, ME4 4BP.

To register your FREE place, please visit nucleusarts.com/mininucleus



DOODLE 'N' DRAW

EVERY SATURDAY

2pm – 4pm

Join artist Nick Ashton for a fun and flexible drawing workshop, for 11–18 year olds.

Taking place at
Chatham library, ME4 4TX.

To register your **FREE** place, email childfriendly@medway.gov.uk

ELF YOURSELF

SATURDAY 18 NOV

2pm – 4pm

Come as yourself, leave as an Elf!
Transform yourself into one of Santa's little helpers and get your elf graduation photo with the one and only Santa Claus!

Taking place at the
Pentagon Shopping Centre, ME4 4HY.

FREE to attend, email childfriendly@medway.gov.uk for more information.

HALLOWEEN TRICK OR TREAT SCARE FEST

FRIDAY 27 OCT

11am – 4pm

Ready for some spook-tacular fun?

Children are invited to create a Halloween goblet and then go on a trail in the Pentagon Shopping Centre to collect stickers, goodies and more, then it's back to the scare zone for an official scare and share photo.

Taking place at the
Pentagon Shopping Centre, ME4 4HY.

FREE to attend, email childfriendly@medway.gov.uk for more information.

Please see the Child-Friendly Medway webpage or email childfriendly@medway.gov.uk for more details.

You can also follow **Child-Friendly Medway** on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and sign up to their monthly newsletter.

medway.gov.uk/
[ChildFriendlyMedwayNewsletter](#)

**YOU SAID,
WE DID.**

You said you wanted us to be more visible on estates, so we now complete a Big Door Knock event every month.

You told us to make ASB reporting easier, so we have reviewed all information on our website and launched the ASB app.

During our door knock at James Street and Mountevans House, *you reported* ASB in the area. We are now working with colleagues at Kent Police to carry out a survey for 'designing out crime'.

If you would like to make any suggestions, give any feedback or make a compliment please email tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The HRA Development Team is responsible for delivering the HRA's build programme.

This includes exploring opportunities to develop on existing HRA owned sites, buying land or open market acquisitions. With a growing population in Medway and an increasing need for affordable homes, we have set a target to increase our council housing stock by 1 percent year on year by 2030.

This will provide more high-quality social housing to meet the needs of Medway residents. All our new homes have a Local Lettings Plan put in place, securing the homes for allocation to existing Medway residents.

Between November 2022 and January 2023, our 'Phase 4' developments in Twydall were completed, delivering 19 two-bedroom houses and nine one-bedroom bungalows. These are much needed family homes, with the bungalows providing accessible homes for older people with access to support from the Woodchurch House, one of our Homes for Independent Living Schemes.



Other developments due for completion include two new blocks of apartments, with six two-bedroom and three one-bedroom in each. One new block is Beacon Court, Copenhagen Road in Gillingham and the second is Longley Road in Rainham.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Tenancy Sustainment Team update

We understand that many of our tenants may be facing financial hardship with the cost-of-living crisis currently affecting many households. You may not know that Medway Council provides services to offer financial advice and support during these times and have specialist teams willing to help lift the burden.

Our tenancy Sustainment Team can assist with the cost-of-living crisis by providing help and financial support with budgeting, food and utility vouchers, money saving ideas for utilities, school clothing vouchers, provide help with rent arrears and assist residents to sustain their tenancy, as paying rent is essential, plus much more.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, do not suffer in silence, please phone our Tenancy Sustainment Team on **01634 333344** who can arrange a telephone triage appointment or home visit or alternatively you can attend one of our **drop-in surgeries**: Wednesdays at



Twydall Library between the hours of 9.30am and 1pm and Fridays between the hours of 1pm and 4.30pm; home visits can be arranged on request.

You are not alone during this financial crisis Medway Council are here to help.

TENANT COMMITMENTS

We have been working with our Resident Scrutiny Panel to design our new customer commitments to ensure that we provide the best service for you, your home and your community.

YOU

Respect – Our officers will treat you and your family with respect, being polite and courteous.

Communication – We will communicate with you regularly and ensure communication is as easy as possible.

Accessibility – We will continue to make our services as accessible as possible, working with residents to identify and remove any barriers.

Support – We will support you to manage your home and money.



YOUR HOME



Providing a competent workforce – Ensuring our officers and contractors are well trained.

Easy to identify – All our staff or staff working on our behalf will show ID.

Sharing our performance – We will show residents how we are performing with repairs and compliancy.

Reacting to your concerns – Someone will visit your property if you report concerns such as damp and mould in your property

Checking you are happy – We will ensure you are happy with works that take place in your home, seek your feedback, and use this to improve services going forward.

YOUR COMMUNITY

Investment in your community — Our officers will visit estates regularly to ensure they are well kept, and issues are identified. Our Estate Wardens from Norse will be our eyes and ears and will work to keep our estates clean and well maintained.

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) App — Those reporting anti-social behaviour can be given access to an app to report ASB 24/7.

Staff Awareness — Ensuring our staff are trained and aware of the latest best practice and guidance.



YOUR SAY



Clear complaints process — We will make it easy for you to make a complaint should things go wrong.

Engagement — We will ensure there are many ways to get involved including surveys, events, or our scrutiny panel.

Influencing — We will provide opportunities to have a say in how our services are run.

Publish and act on Tenant Satisfaction Measures — We will publish our survey results and details of how we have responded to them.

YOUR COMMITMENT TO US

Respect — We ask that you treat our officers with respect.

Speak up — Let us know if you are having difficulties, whether financial, repairs or something else, as soon as possible so we can help and support you.

Allow us access — This allows us to carry out safety inspections, carry out repairs and install improvements.

Pay your rent — This allows us to fulfil our commitments to you.





WANT TO SEE HOW WE ARE PERFORMING?

Look at our performance monitoring figures on the website:

medway.gov.uk/HousingPerformance

USEFUL CONTACTS



REPAIRS

You can request a repair from us at any time of day, seven days a week. Repairs are attended by our contractors Mears and are prioritised into emergency, urgent and non-urgent repairs.

Phone: **01634 333601**
Freephone: **0800 073 0073**
email: housingrepairs@medway.gov.uk

HOUSING OFFICERS – TENANCY

For anything related to your tenancy, or to report anti-social behaviour.

Phone: **01634 333344**
email: housingtenancyteam@medway.gov.uk

HOUSING OFFICERS – INCOME

For anything related to your rent, service charges or financial support.

phone: **01634 333344**
email: housingincometeam@medway.gov.uk

You can contact a housing officer Monday to Thursday from 9.30am to 5pm, and Fridays from 9.30am to 4.45pm, excluding bank holidays.

COST OF LIVING: HELP FOR HOUSEHOLDS

For help and advice, please visit:
medway.gov.uk/householdhelp

REGISTER FOR A HOUSING SERVICES ONLINE ACCOUNT

A Housing Services Online account is a simple way to manage your housing tenancies in one place.

With an account, you can:

- pay housing rent
- keep track of balances
- view statements
- see recent payments.

Registering for an account online takes about five minutes. Sign up or login at

medway.gov.uk/HousingAccount

We would like to remind our customers to be aware of suspicious phone calls, messages or callers to their property.

All our housing staff and contractors will wear an ID badge.

We will always publicise if we or contractors working on our behalf are conducting a survey in your area, or make an appointment with you to visit your property.

If you have any doubts do not engage with such callers. Please phone the main office on **01634 333344** to check details or report any suspicious activity.

To request a stop cold callers pack phone **01634 333333** or email consumer.protection@medway.gov.uk



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medway.gov.uk/Housing

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