

SPRING
2024

Housing Matters.

EXCLUSIVE EZINE

FOR MEDWAY COUNCIL TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS



IN THIS ISSUE

CHARGING SAFELY

SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

MAKING THINGS RIGHT

medway.gov.uk/housing

Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You

WELCOME TO THE SPRING EDITION OF HOUSING MATTERS



Hello, I'm Adam Bryan and I'm pleased to introduce myself as the new Director of Place at Medway. My role is responsible for leading Medway's monumental regeneration programme, ensuring the delivery of critical front-line services to its 280,000 residents, and continuing to drive the vibrant cultural programme to establish Medway as a great place to live, work, learn and visit.

It's absolutely my approach to be as connected and open as possible, and I recently attended a Big Door Knock event, where I met with many tenants to discuss how you feel we are performing and listen to your suggestions for improvement.

You may have seen in the news that Medway council, like many local authorities are facing financial pressures on the Revenue Budget and exploring the reduction of non-statutory expenditure, whilst continuing to support vulnerable members of the community. I would like to assure Tenants that this will not impact the services that they receive from the Housing Team.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is funded from the rent collected from tenants. This system allows the council to provide better services and improvements to our housing stock. The money from the HRA is separate from the Revenue Budget and is protected to ensure that this money can only be spent on housing services.

As you may know, our main Council office at Gun Wharf, continues to be affected by on going structural work. There has been no disruption to the services that we deliver in Housing as we make use of alternative office locations, hubs and community rooms.

If you have any suggestions for future articles, please contact us by email:
tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



THE BIG DOOR KNOCK

The Housing Services Team will be holding Big Door Knock events to introduce ourselves to you, let you know what support we can offer, how you can keep in touch with us and find out what's important to you. We will be holding events in the following locations:

17 April – Twydall Eastcourt Lane/Green, Goudhurst Road, Lamberhurst Green and surrounding areas

15 May – Hazlemere Drive area Gillingham

21 June – Twydall Benenden Manor, Petham Green, Twydall Green and surrounding areas

DROP IN RESIDENT'S SURGERIES

Speak to the Housing Team and our Contractor Mears about any housing related matters or repairs you may need:

4 April – Wigmore Library 11am-1pm

26 April – Gillingham Library 11am-1pm

7 May – Twydall Library 11am-1pm

20 May – Rainham Library 11am-1pm

6 June – Wigmore Library 11am-1pm

28 June – Gillingham Library 11am-1pm



EASTER EVENT

Housing Services will be holding an Easter Event on **Monday, 8 April** from 11am – 2pm

There will be crafts and activities for all the family.

Twydall Community Centre,
125 Beechings Way, Gillingham, ME8 6TQ

COMING SOON...

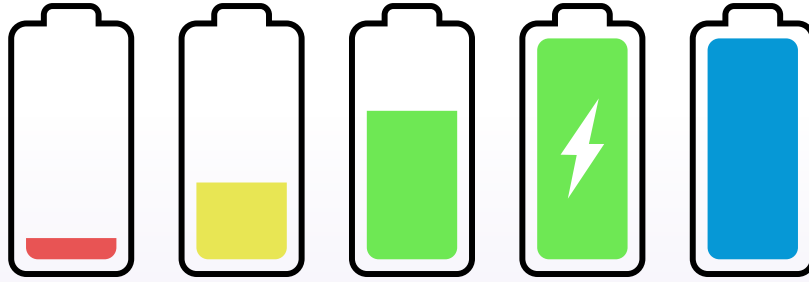
This summer we will be bringing back our much loved gardening competition.

We will be making an announcements on social media on how you can apply.

If you would like more information then email tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk

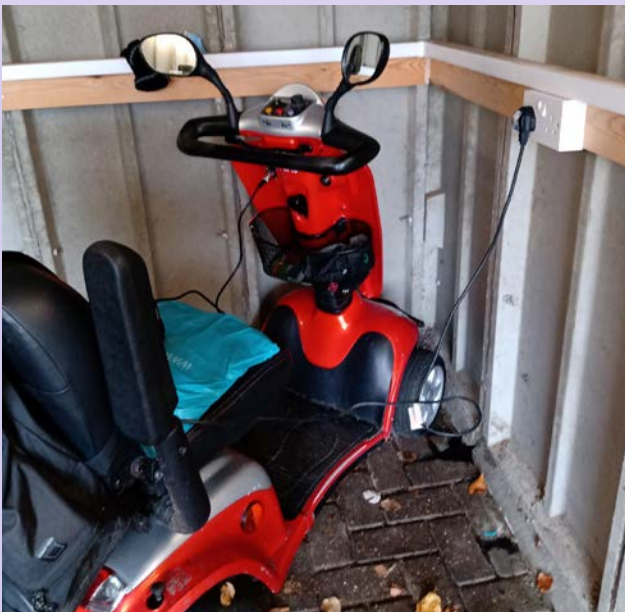


Keep up to date with these and all our other events at medway.gov.uk/HousingServicesEvents



LITHIUM BATTERIES

Lithium-ion batteries are rechargeable and are used in many personal electronic products such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops, electric toothbrushes, tools, hoverboards, scooters (mobility and e-scooters) and vaping devices.



When purchasing, using, and storing an electrical product that uses a lithium-ion battery, be sure to:

- Always use the charger that came with your phone, tablet, e-cigarette, or mobile device.
- If you need to buy a replacement, always choose a branded, genuine product from a supplier you can trust. There are lots of fakes out there, and it can be difficult to spot the difference.
- Avoid storing, using or charging batteries at very high or low temperatures.
- Protect batteries against being damaged – that's crushed, punctured or immersed in water.
- Don't leave items continuously on charge after the charge cycle is complete – it's best not to leave your phone plugged in overnight for example.
- Never cover chargers or charging devices – that includes using your laptop power lead in bed.
- When you travel, avoid keeping all your items containing lithium ion batteries together, especially on a plane. Check with your flight carrier for additional information or advice.
- Don't overload your sockets.

If not used properly, stored or charged correctly these products can have devastating consequences such as fires.

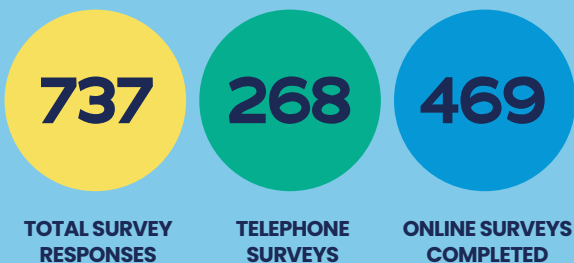


Register electrical items at
[RegisterMyAppliance.org.uk](https://www.RegisterMyAppliance.org.uk)

TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES SURVEYS

In our autumn edition, we told you all about the tenant satisfaction measures surveys that we were about to carry out in partnership with In House.

The survey was carried out online and over the phone during September and October 2023 and we are pleased to be able to share the results with you and also how we will use them. These results will be submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2024.



What are we doing to continue to improve our services?

We have looked at the areas with the lowest satisfaction and held Big Door Knocks in these areas.

We are increasing communication through social media to reach younger age groups. We have completed a follow-on survey for all those who said they had made a complaint in the past 12 months. This will allow us to drill down to specific issues and help us improve processes for customers.

Key officers have completed training for handling housing related complaints.

We are increasing the frequency of housing surgeries in places that are close to your home. We are working with contractors and partners to deliver more social value projects in your neighbourhoods.

We would like to say thank you to everyone that took part in the survey, your feedback is really important in helping us continue to improve the services that we deliver.

For more information on the ways you can influence our services and for all our housing events please visit [medway.gov.uk/CouncilTenants](https://www.medway.gov.uk/CouncilTenants)

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- 69% ▲ Overall satisfaction
- 70.6% ▲ Satisfaction with repairs
- 66.9% ▲ Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
- 68.8% ▲ Satisfaction that home is well maintained
- 69.8% ▲ Satisfaction that you feel safe at home
- 51.3% ▲ Satisfaction that your landlord listens and acts
- 61.8% ▲ Satisfaction that your landlord keeps you well informed
- 67.7% ▲ Your landlord is fair and respectful
- 26.2% ▼ Satisfaction with complaint handling
- 63.6% ▲ Satisfaction that communal areas are kept clean and well maintained
- 53.6% ▲ Satisfaction that your landlord makes a positive contribution
- 45% ▲ Satisfaction with landlords handling of anti-social behaviour

▲ ▼ Improvement since our last survey

PAYING YOUR RENT

All tenants should have received their annual rent increase notification letter at the end of February, informing you of your new rent charge from Monday, 1 April 2024.

This letter notified you of your new rent amount for 2024/25 financial year, and how much you will need to increase your rent payments by.

What you need to do

The next steps set out what you need to do, depending on how your rent is usually paid:

Universal credit

If you are a universal credit claimant, it is extremely important you notify the DWP via your journal on 1 April 2024, of your new rent charge so that your benefit can be increased to cover your rent. If you fail to notify universal credit of your new rent amount, you may be liable to make the shortfall payment yourself, so please do not forget to update your journal.

Standing order

If you pay your rent by standing order, you need to notify your bank or change your rent to the new amount from 1 April 2024 to cover the rent increase via your online banking app, if you have one.

Payment card

If you pay your rent online or via a payment card, please remember to the new amount from 1 April 2024.

Direct Debit

If you pay your rent by Direct Debit then this will be automatically adjusted.



Remember we are here to help

If you are not sure how your monthly rent is calculated or require advice about paying your rent, please phone our Income Team on **01634 333344** or email **housingincometeam@medway.gov.uk**

The Tenancy Sustainment Team, hold surgeries at Twydall Library every Wednesday from 9 am – 1pm and Friday 1pm – 4.30pm.

Come and see the team for:

- Financial assistance
- Support with budgeting
- Household Support Grant
- Food and utility vouchers
- Money saving ideas
- School clothing vouchers
- Help with rent arrears
- Help to sustain your tenancy

Did you know that you can access your rent account online? Visit

medway.gov.uk/HousingAccount

to find out more and to register.



DAMP AND MOULD

Mould grows on damp surfaces. In most cases it is caused by condensation. This is moist air in the home from everyday 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. Mears have produced a short video that could help:

mearsgroup.co.uk/diy-videos

If you are experiencing damp, mould or condensation with your home, please phone **01634 333344** or email **hradampandmould@medway.gov.uk** to arrange an inspection.



**During 2023,
we raised 713
jobs for mould
treatment.**



CONSUMER STANDARDS

The Regulator for Social Housing has set out its new standards for social housing landlords, designed to protect tenants and improve the service they receive. They will apply to all social landlords from 1 April 2024.

RSH sets new standards to drive improvements in social housing – find out more at:

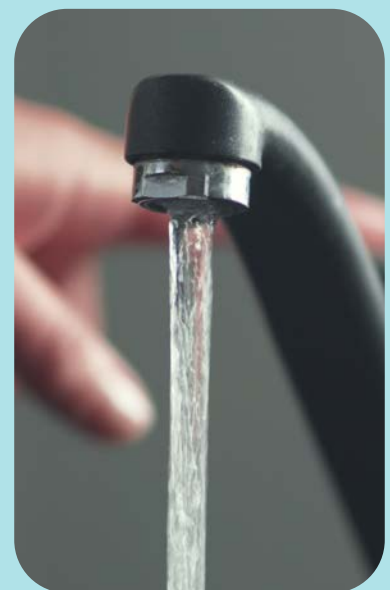
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-consumer-standards>

WATER SAFETY AWARENESS

Legionella is a bacteria which in some conditions can cause illness if someone breathes in small droplets of water suspended in the air containing this bacteria. It causes serious illness such as Legionnaires' disease, which is a type of pneumonia.

If your property has been empty for a while (e.g. after a holiday), flush the whole water system for at least two minutes. First flush the toilet, then let the kitchen taps and the hand basin taps run for at least two minutes to let both hot and cold water pass through.

You should also flush an outside tap if you have one. If your shower has not been used for a week or more, run water from both hot and cold supplies through the shower hose and shower head for two minutes. To ensure no spray escapes run it through a bucket of water or water already in the bath.



DOMESTIC ABUSE

Our Medway Domestic Abuse Service, provided by Oasis, is a specialist support service for victims of domestic abuse and their families.



Oasis provides:

- A confidential helpline offering emotional support.
- Advice on what to do.
- Ongoing one-to-one support to help victims stay safe and recover from their abuse.

If you're in immediate danger you may leave your home to get help.

The Medway Domestic Abuse Service can help you access emergency accommodation in a refuge.

How to get help

Phone the Medway Domestic Abuse Service confidential

number on **0800 917 9948**

or email **info@choicesdaservice.org.uk**

or visit **www.oasisdaservice.org**

If you are in immediate danger

Phone 999 and ask for the police.

If you are in danger and unable to talk on the phone

Dial 999, listen to the operator's questions and respond by coughing or tapping the handset. Then follow the instructions depending on whether you are calling from a mobile or a landline.

TENANCY UPDATE

Consulting on your tenancy agreement

We began the process of updating our tenancy agreement in the summer of 2023. The draft agreement was published as part of a consultation period from 10th November until Friday 22nd December. During this time we held 12 in person consultation events and a virtual consultation, engaging with over 100 residents. With very positive feedback we were able to finalise the tenancy agreement. Official notification was sent out with Rent update letters and the agreement takes affect from 1st April 2024.

Tenant panel update

The Tenants Panel met in January 2024. The agenda included a presentation on our Tenant Satisfaction Survey, reviewing the updated Asset Management Strategy, a presentation on a new product that may help with energy efficiency, and a review of the HRA budget.

We always strive to ensure our panel are involved in important parts of housing management, that their views are taken into account and they, as representatives of all our residents, are able to influence decisions we make. Our Tenants Panel were also asked to undertake a mini project, reviewing updates to our website. We have created a landing page for our residents to help them find information and services. With their feedback we were able to add additional information that they felt was important to our residents. The panel will meet again in April.

If you would be interested in joining our Tenants Panel or would like more information, please phone us on **01634 333344** or email tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

A new build block of nine flats in Longley Road, Rainham was completed and handed over to the HRA at the end of March 2024 providing six two-bedroom and three one-bedroom flats for Affordable Rent.

This follows the handover of another new build block of seven two-bedroom and two one-bedroom flats in Gillingham, in November 2023.

The HRA Development Team is currently progressing Phase 5 of the HRA's own build programme, which consists of two sites in Twydall and Gillingham. Procurement of the build contract is underway, with works anticipated to start on site in early summer 2024.

These two sites will deliver 37 affordable homes for eligible Medway residents, with a mix of one and two-bedroom flats and family size houses. These developments are part of the HRA's ongoing commitment to building more affordable housing in Medway.



MAKING THINGS RIGHT CAMPAIGN



As a member of Kent Housing Group, we are supporting the Make Things Right campaign;

“Everyone deserves a home that is safe, secure, and well maintained.”

The group representing the housing sector in Kent and Medway is throwing its weight behind a Government campaign to ensure those living in social housing who have issues with their home know their rights, know how to complain, and feel empowered in the knowledge that their voice will be heard.

The campaign highlights that if you live in social housing, your landlord is responsible for fixing issues including damp and mould, leaks, broken locks or adaptations you may need to your home if you're disabled.

Landlords can also help with anti-social behaviour, like noisy neighbours, the campaign points out.

The Make Things Right campaign assures that the Housing Ombudsman is impartial, will investigate fairly and can order your landlord to take action. If the Ombudsman has ruled against a landlord, they must show they are taking action within six-eight weeks. Last year, the Ombudsman ordered landlords to pay over £1m in compensation to residents.

Know the three steps to get an issue fixed

Step 1

Report it to your landlord. Then, if it is not fixed...

Step 2

Complain through your landlord's complaint process, and if you're not happy with the final response from your landlord...

Step 3

Escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

Visit [gov.uk/social-housing](https://www.gov.uk/social-housing)

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT TO US

We're committed to providing excellent customer service to all our residents and visitors. However, there may be times when you feel unhappy with the service we've provided.

Your feedback is very important to us. Knowing what you think or want helps us improve our services.

If you make a complaint, we'll investigate it thoroughly and let you know the outcome. We'll be fair and we'll try to put things right if we've made a mistake.

You can make a complaint in the following ways

- Online at [medway.gov.uk](https://www.medway.gov.uk)
- Write to: **Customer Relations Team, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR**
- In person at a local Community hub
- Phone: **01634 333 333**
- Text relay: **18001 01634 333 333**

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that every time a repairs inspector visits your home, we now carry out additional surveys to check the general condition and that it is safe.

This may mean that our visits may take a little longer but collecting all this information will help us to create accurate programmes of work so that we can continue to invest in your homes.

Over the next three years we plan to invest £21m in our current stock through planned maintenance programmes.

During 2023 we completed:

- 945 Decency Surveys which confirms the general condition of a property
- 1014 HHSRS assessments which confirms the safety of a property



**YOU SAID,
WE DID.**



Following analysis of calls to our **01634 333344** housing duty line number we have amended our phonenumber opening times to meet the needs of our tenants.

Monday	9am - 4pm
Tuesday	9am - 4pm
Wednesday	9.30am - 4pm
Thursday	9.30am - 4pm
Friday	9.30am - 4pm

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



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



Follow us on Facebook – search for **Medway Council – Housing Services** for all the latest news, events and things that matter to you.

medway.gov.uk/housing

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