

SUMMER
2024

Housing Matters.

EXCLUSIVE EZINE

FOR MEDWAY COUNCIL TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS



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[Medway.gov.uk/Housing](https://www.Medway.gov.uk/Housing)

Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You

WELCOME FROM THE TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL

Welcome to the Summer edition of Housing Matters, as ever there is lots going on and so much to share with you.

As a panel we represent all of the tenants and leaseholders and ensure that we hold the Housing Team to account on matters that are important to all of us. The panel meet quarterly and discuss policies, events, and relevant information.

As a panel we have recently helped the Housing Team to review policies for pets and anti-social behaviour. We are really pleased that the team took our feedback on board and look forward to the policies being published.

We hope that everyone will make the most of the summer weather to attend some of the events the team have planned and also estate inspections in your area.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



BIG DOOR KNOCKS

Friday, 21 June – Twydall

Benenden Manor, Twydall Green, Woodchurch House, Petham Green and surrounding area.

Thursday, 11 July – Brompton

Thursday, 8 August – Twydall

Brabourne Avenue, Hollingbourne Road, Patixbourne Avenue and surrounding Roads.

Friday, 20 September

Cornish Manors, James Street, Bluebell Close, Firethorn Close and surrounding roads.

DROP IN RESIDENT'S SURGERIES

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

Thursday, 20 June – Gillingham Library

11am to 1pm

Tuesday, 9 July – Twydall Library

11am to 1pm

Monday, 15 July – Rainham Library

11am to 1pm

Thursday, 8 August – Wigmore Library

11am to 1pm

Friday, 30 August – Gillingham Library

11am to 1pm

SUMMER EVENTS

We will be running more events over the summer so please look out for these and come along!

RESIDENT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL

Friday, 12 July – Rainbow Room – 2pm to 4pm



Keep up to date with these and all our other events at
[Medway.gov.uk/HousingServicesEvents](https://www.medway.gov.uk/HousingServicesEvents)

THE BIG LUNCH

The Big Lunch took place on Wednesday, 29 May and was a huge success. Residents were able to take part in different activities including planting seeds and a meet and greet with Chase and Sky from Paw Patrol. Residents enjoyed meeting representatives from various services and were able to hear about many different activities taking place across Medway.



HOUSING REGULATOR TO INSPECT OUR SERVICES



We have been advised by the Housing Regulator that we will be inspected as part of their four year planned programme. We are currently gathering information for the Regulator, and the inspection team will be on site with us in early September.

The inspection will benefit you, as the regulator will assess our services to help improve the quality of social housing provided and to ensure that every tenant has a decent, safe, and secure home.

The inspection will look at areas that we discuss with you at our Big Door Knock events including:

- The safety and quality of the homes we provide
- Our repairs and maintenance service
- Our complaints process
- How we treat you
- How we engage with you and keep you updated on our progress
- If easy it is for you to contact us, and if the information that we provide to you is clear and accessible.

We look forward to working with the regulator to continue develop an open and transparent service.

UPDATE ON REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

As you may be aware, our current repairs and maintenance contract with Mears is coming to the end of its term.

Over the past 18 months, we have reviewed how the existing contract runs, researched how others deliver their services, and considered legislative changes. We have also engaged with residents and other key stakeholders to ensure they had the opportunity to say how the service should be run.

After a very thorough process, the decision was made to change how we currently deliver repairs and maintenance to our housing stock, with specialist contracts being created for gas and electrics rather than them falling under one contract. This change would result in us being able to demonstrate how Medway will only use competent and accredited contractors to ensure that the service provided to our residents is as good as it can be. The decision was also taken to create new specialist compliance contracts for fire risk assessment surveys, servicing and remedial works, water management functions, asbestos surveying and asbestos remedial works. Medway specific specifications were created and put out to tender shortly after the repairs, gas and electrical contracts.



Following approval from council cabinet we have been granted approval to appoint the following contractors:

Repairs – Mears

Gas – Swale Heating

Electrics – RGE Services

These new contracts will officially start on 1 September 2024 and work is already underway to make sure there is a smooth transition. We will be sending an information pack about repairs and maintenance soon so please look out for this.

We are currently working through the compliance procurement process, and we will make announcements regarding those contracts once approval has been granted.

We will be holding some 'Meet the contractor' events over the summer prior to the new contracts commencing so you can know what and who to expect when repairs and maintenance is completed in your home and across our estates.



DISREPAIR SCAM

WARNING TO TENANTS

We would like to warn residents to be wary of **'claims farmers'** operating in the area. Calls can be made from unknown numbers or even local lines.

These companies operate by cold calling, leaflets and social media to encourage tenants to pursue claims against their landlord for disrepair. These companies claim to be calling from the 'Housing Maintenance Department' or 'Repairs Team' or even working on behalf of Medway Council.

Tenants' details are often sold on to 'no win, no fee' solicitors. This personal information is likely to be sold at a profit, so we advise you to only share your data relating to you and your household if you are sure that you know who will be receiving it. It is worth thinking about who might benefit from having your details before disclosing anything to any callers.

In many cases, tenants will find themselves with legal costs to pay even if they later withdraw their claim. In other cases, any financial reward will be less than a tenant could have been offered with a genuine claim through the Housing Ombudsman Service.

We've heard of stories in the housing sector where such companies have targeted vulnerable tenants. Previous cases dealt with by the Housing Associations have seen claims management companies delay submitting the claim until the tenant's cooling off period has ended. In these cases, the Housing Association has



completed repairs, resulting in the claim not being upheld.

Tenants are reminded that they should let us know quickly if any repairs are needed to their home as part of the tenancy agreement.

If you need to request a repair to your home, you can do this in the following ways:

**Phone: 01634 333601 or
freephone 0800 0730073**

Email: HousingRepairs@Medway.gov.uk

Should you have any concerns around the safety of your home or aware of something on our estates then email **HousingSafetyConern@medway.gov.uk**

Please be assured that all our officers and contractors will always have visible ID and you can verify this by calling the number on the reverse of the card.



HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

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 333333
- Text relay: 18001 01634 333 333

During 2023/24 we received a total of 81 formal complaints relating to the HRA Housing Service.

We responded to 71 stage one complaints, of which 71% were within 10 working days

We responded to 13 stage two complaints, of which 100% were within 10 working days.

Using feedback from residents, who have made a complaint in the past 12 months, we are working to ensure that it is easy to make a complaint and it is dealt with efficiently and on time.

Water hygiene: LEGIONELLA



What is legionella?

Legionella is bacteria which in the right conditions can cause illness by breathing 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 and also flulike illness such as Pontic fever.

Legionella bacteria can be found naturally in rivers and ponds where it is not an issue, however under the wrong conditions it can become a serious health risk in man-made water systems. This is particularly the case for hot and cold water systems that supply sinks, showers and washing machines.

Keeping your home safe from Legionella

Cleaning and regular flushing of water outlets can help to prevent risk, as described below:



0 degrees centigrade

– bacterium dormant.



20 – 45 degrees centigrade

– legionella will multiply.



45 to 60 degrees centigrade

– legionella survive but cannot multiply.



60 degrees centigrade plus

– legionella will not survive.

Shower heads

Shower heads need to be regularly cleaned to prevent build up of limescale.

If your shower head has not been used for a

- week or more, run water from both hot and cold supplies through the shower hose for two minutes.

- To ensure no spray escapes from the shower head, run it through a bucket of water or full bath.

Taps

- All taps within your property need to be clean and free from limescale.
- Please do not forget to regularly flush outside taps.

Hoses

- If you have an outside tap with a hose attachment please ensure all the water is displaced from the hose before storage.

Flush

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

Hot water

- Your hot water and heating system would have been installed and designed to prevent water stagnation, but it is important you let us know ASAP if the hot water system becomes faulty.
- Please contact the dedicated repair line to report any issues: **01634 333601**.

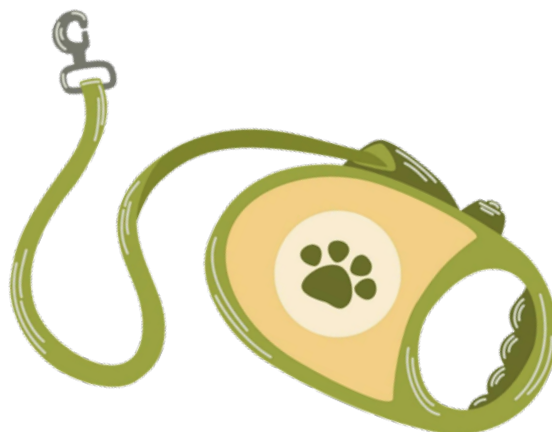
For further enquiries please phone:
01634 333601 or email:
Housing.repairs@medway.gov.uk

YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

Our new tenancy agreements are now live on our website:
[Medway.gov.uk/TenancyAgreements](https://medway.gov.uk/TenancyAgreements)

The new tenancy agreements went live on 1 April 2024 and all tenants moved across onto the new terms and conditions.

Thank you to everyone who came along to our consultation events for the new tenancy agreements in December 2023 and giving us your feedback.



LAUNCH OF PET POLICY

Our latest Pet Policy launched on 1 June following consultation with our Residents Panel, our Animal Warden team and relevant pet welfare organisations. We are keen to take a responsible pet ownership approach and have worked to provide a balance between having pets and ensuring we tackle any nuisance.

Dogs are allowed in over 70% of our properties but some blocks of flats are allocated as dog free. The new policy outlines these. There is a six-week period for those who have dogs that have resided in a dog free block for at least the last three months to come forward and register these pets and ownership will be considered for a dog if there have been no complaints or issues. This permission will cease when the dog passes and no new permissions will be granted in these blocks.

To view our pet policy please visit:
[Medway.gov.uk/PetsPolicy](https://medway.gov.uk/PetsPolicy)

If you have any questions please contact your Tenancy Management Officer on 01634 333344 or email:
HousingTenancyTeam@medway.gov.uk



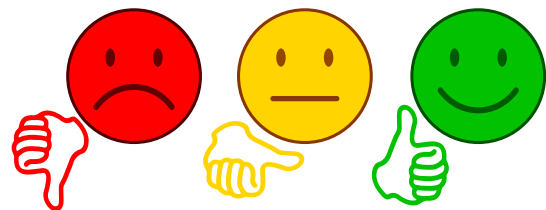
TRURO MANOR – DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Truro Manor is an exciting new development of 44 homes which is being delivered by Medway Development Company in partnership with Medway Council in Spring 2025. Across five storeys there will be 15 x one-bed and 29 x two-bed flats available for affordable rent that are allocated by Medway Council to local residents via Kent Home Choice. The units have an open plan living and kitchen area, balconies, cycle storage and a lift. This development is part of the HRA's ongoing commitment to providing more affordable housing in Medway.



YOU SAID, WE DID..

Following reports of anti-social behaviour before school at Derwent Way, we have recently changed access times in the surrounding blocks. The trade buttons at all Derwent Way blocks now operate from 9am to 12noon instead of 7am to 12noon.



Some tenants told us that they were dissatisfied with the way we handle complaints, we now link a complaints learning survey to all our responses so we can find out more about how we can improve the process.



THE HANDYMAN SERVICE

The Handyman Service can help customers by carrying out small jobs around the home free of charge.

The service will focus on any small jobs around the house that do not need immediate attention and fall outside of contracted repair works.

Customers will need to provide materials for any job carried out.

Eligibility

To qualify for the Handyman Service you must:

- ✓ have a clear rent account or be keeping to a repayment plan
- ✓ have no records of anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- ✓ have allowed us to carry out gas servicing and planned maintenance to your home without obstruction
- ✓ ensure that it is compliant with your tenancy agreement.

What the Handyman provides

The Handyman is a skilled person who has the tools and equipment needed to carry out works.

Generally, the Handyman will be able to carry out small jobs up to a maximum of two hours.

Customers will be limited to two hours service per year (from 1 April to 31 March).

What jobs the Handyman can do?

Jobs that the Handyman can do include:

- ✓ putting up shelves
- ✓ adjusting, renewing or fixing internal doors or gates
- ✓ easing and adjusting cupboard doors
- ✓ hanging pictures, curtain rails, blinds and mirrors.

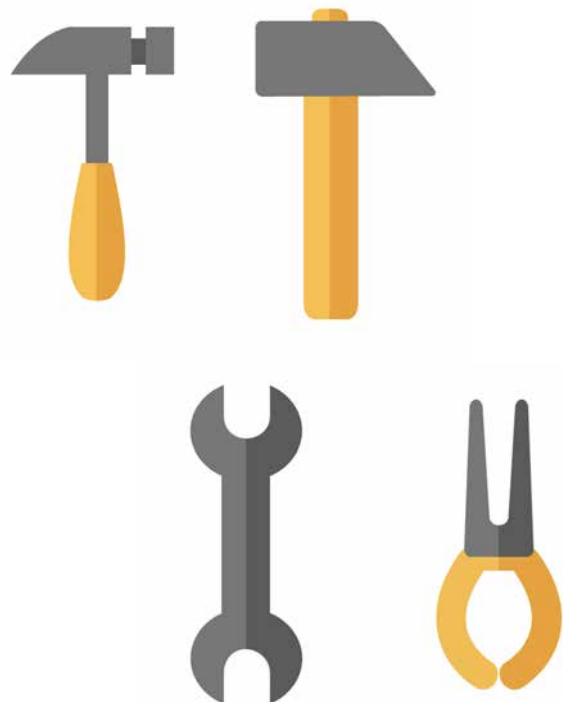
Please note that any of these items must already be cut to size.

The Handyman can also:

- ✓ assemble flat pack furniture
- ✓ fit or renew doorbells
- ✓ put up a washing line to existing posts or hooks
- ✓ bleed radiators
- ✓ fit all brackets or hanging baskets
- ✓ trim internal doors to fit new carpets or floor coverings
- ✓ fit a plug or chain to a bath, basin or sink
- ✓ change light bulbs or remove or replace lampshades, curtains and pelmets.
- ✗ The Handyman will not be able to complete any gas or electrical works.

How to book

You can make appointments for the service by calling the Housing Repairs Team on 01634 333 601 or freephone 08000 730 073.



WASTE AND RECYCLING

Medway currently operate a weekly waste collection service for general waste, recycling and garden/food waste.

RECYCLING – WHAT GOES IN WHICH BAG?

Use blue reusable recycling bags for:

- magazines or newspapers
- telephone directories
- envelopes and junk mail
- paper
- cardboard.



Use white reusable recycling bags or clear recycling sacks for:

- glass bottles and jars
- metal food and drink cans
- clean metal foil
- plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays.



Food and garden waste

Depending on the type of property you live in, if you have a brown bin you can dispose of your food waste in your brown bin. You can collect a food caddy bin from your local library or community hub where they also sell caddy liners for £2.20 per roll.

You can use your brown bin for:

- meat and fish
- plate scrapings
- fruit and vegetable peelings and cores
- egg shells
- tea bags and coffee grounds
- grass and hedge clippings
- garden trimmings and weeds
- small branches (no more than 5cm diameter)
- dead plants.

Some homes cannot have a brown wheelie bin. Medway Council Waste Services can provide a 23-litre food bin for food waste and two reusable brown sacks for garden waste. Food waste cannot be put in brown sacks.

To order a 23-litre food bin and reusable brown sacks, please phone **01634 333333**.





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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