SUMMER 2025

Housing Matters.

FOR MEDWAY COUNCIL TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS



Are you a pensioner?

Check if you or your loved ones can get Pension Credit support

r Credits and all of the support ilable to households in Medway

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Medway.gov.uk/Housing



MedwayGo

Serving You

WELCOME TO THE SUMMER EDITION OF HOUSING MATTERS



Hello! I'm Rachel Valerio, Head of Tenant Services. This spring, we've collaborated with tenants on several exciting initiatives, including the Stop Social Housing Stigma Campaign and the launch of the Garden Tools Loan Scheme, inspired by feedback from our Big Door Knock events.

Stay updated by visiting our Housing Facebook Page or our website at Medway Council Tenants. We'll keep you informed about the wide range of summer activities offered by various Medway Council services, including Child Friendly Medway, Medway Adult Education, Medway Go, and the Public Health Team.

Throughout the summer, our officers will be out and about, listening to your views and

sharing the improvements we've made based on your feedback. Your feedback is crucial in helping us shape and improve our services, and I look forward to meeting you in person at our Big Door Knock events.

If you would like to be more involved in the services delivered by Housing, then please get in contact with the team by emailing

ResidentEngagement@Medway.gov.uk

MEET THE TEAM

My name is Ola Dopemu and I have been working in the Income Team for the last three years. I am very fortunate to be part of a team that support one another and has a good manager.

I like working in housing because, we as a team are making a difference by helping people access safe and affordable homes, especially those who are vulnerable or in need.

The sense of purpose can be really fulfilling, and we get to see the direct impact of our work on families in the community. I am proud to be part of an organisation making a difference to people's lives. I am most proud to be part of Medway Council as we are driven by values, like fairness and good service to others. I take pride knowing that we work hard to sustain tenancies, maximise the income of tenants, help improve living standards and prevent homelessness.

My interests outside of work include spending time with my family, reading, watching films and travelling. This helps me stay focused and motivated in my role.



REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTORS

Following on from the successful tenders of the repairs and maintenance contracts last year, Medway Council would like to recap on each contractor's responsibility under the repairs and maintenance service.



All contracts began on 1st September 2024 and all the successful contractors have committed a financial contribution over the next 12 years which will contribute to the HRA's 'One Medway' social value promise.

STOP SOCIAL HOUSING STIGMA

Housing Services are proud members of the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign.

Our Chief Housing Officer, Rebecca Wilcox and members of the Tenant Panel were delighted to attend the Parliamentary launch of the Pioneer Traveller programme, working with other housing providers and tenants to challenge stigma attached to social housing.

To find out more about the campaign and to become a member visit the website:

https://stopsocialhousingstigma.org



STAY PUT FIRE SAFETY GUIDANCE

Purpose-built blocks of flats are designed on the 'stay put' principle, which means each dwelling is a fire-resisting enclosure which will typically hold back fire for a minimum of 30 minutes to communal areas, 60 minutes from flat to flat due the construction methods and materials used.

Where these high levels of structural fire resistance are provided, it is usually safer for residents to remain in their home if fire breaks out in another part of the building, such as another flat in the block or the common parts.

It is important to recognise however that in some major fires, there may come a point when it is no longer safe to stay put. If at any stage you become affected by smoke, heat or fire, you should leave by the nearest available exit route, even if there is stay put strategy in place.

Stay put is still the preferred strategy for most properties and will be adopted wherever possible in line with national fire safety guidance.

Where a stay put strategy is in place the fire and rescue service will evacuate any properties they consider to be at risk in the event of fire, but this is likely to be restricted to certain floors or parts of the building.





Therefore, in the event of a fire alarm sounding outside your flat in the communal area, it is usually safe to stay put, providing you are not affected by smoke or fire. If for any reason your flat front door is open, please close it immediately. You do not want smoke entering your flat.

If your flat is affected by fire i.e. you have a fire or are affected by smoke or heat that is not apparent, you must leave the property closing all doors behind you. Activate the nearest fire alarm call point, if present and follow the fire escape signs to a place of safety, outside and away from the building.

If you are in a communal area and you notice smoke or a fire, activate the nearest call point and follow the fire escape signs to a place of safety, outside and away from the building. Do not return to your flat to gather items. Summon assistance from the emergency services when safe to do so. This information can be seen on fire action notices that are present in communal areas of the building.

Please DO NOT open your front door to see what is going on, you are safe in your flat with the doors closed. A reminder that all communal areas – landings, stairs, corridors, walkways and balconies must be kept clear and easily accessible should access for emergency services or evacuation be required.

Items such as furniture, rubbish or any other belongings left in the corridors or lobbies presents a serious fire risk and will be removed immediately.

You cannot keep buggies, bicycles or any other household goods in any communal area, as they are fire hazards. The area outside your property must also be kept clean and clear at all times. These include, but are not limited to:

- Mobility scooters
- E-bikes
- ShoesOther belongings

the flat

- Rubbish
- Door mats should be sited internal to
- Bikes
- Pushchairs
- Plants
- No personal items should be charged in communal areas including mobility scooters - and NO smoking in communal areas.

If you identify any issue with fire doors within your property or the block in general, then please call housing repairs immediately on **01634 333601** and select **option 2**.

If you have any concerns relating to this stay put policy, please email **HousingSafetyConcern@medway.gov.uk**

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour, or ASB, can cover a range of behaviours that have a negative impact on people by causing nuisance, alarm or distress.

We work in partnership with other agencies such as Kent Police to tackle issues across our communities in Medway.

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 the tenancy team:

- Opened 91 cases
- Closed 71 cases
- Recorded 6 cases that related to hate crime



What can we do?

If you report ASB to us, we will discuss with you how we will deal with your report to ensure you're comfortable with the action we plan to take. Regular updates will be provided throughout the investigation.

Typically, we will:

- Acknowledge your report and give you a unique reference number.
- Advise you whether the issue is deemed ASB, a tenancy breach or not something that we would be able to investigate.
- Discuss the issues with you and agree an action plan of what we can or will do.
- Communicate with you regularly to review the case and let you know of any progress
- Always contact you before we close your case.

For more information about anti social behaviour, visit our website: Medway.gov.uk/HousingASB

where you will find a handy ASB toolkit to help identify and report cases to us.

DAMP & MOULD

LET'S TACKLE IT TOGETHER

What is damp and mould?

Mould grows on damp surfaces, often caused by condensation. This occurs when moist air from everyday activities like cooking and showering settles on cold surfaces.

Sometimes, dampness is due to water entering your home from leaking pipes, blocked gutters, or an exterior wall needing repointing. It can also be a combination of both water ingress and condensation.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

Check your home for:

- Overflow from blocked gutters 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 or missing damp course.

Leaks and rising damp often leave "tide marks" and typically travel up to about a metre on the wall without black mould growth.

If you suspect the mould is due to external dampness, contact us. We will send someone to fix it and provide advice on tackling mould from condensation.

What causes condensation?

Condensation is common in British homes during colder months. It happens when warm, moist air hits a cold surface like a window or external wall, condensing into water droplets. If left unchecked, this can develop into black mould, which looks and smells unpleasant and can cause health problems.

Look for condensation in corners, near windows, behind wardrobes, inside cupboards, on the ceiling, or in places with little air movement. It usually occurs at night when temperatures drop, and doors and windows are closed. Even breathing can cause condensation, leading to dampness where mould can grow.



How to reduce condensation

- Keep the inside temperature relatively constant.
- Ensure tumble dryers are properly vented.
- Keep trickle vents on windows open.
- Avoid drying clothes indoors. If necessary, place the clothes rack near an open window in a room with the door shut. Do not dry clothes over radiators.
- Move furniture away from external walls.
- · Do not disable any extraction units.
- Avoid using paraffin gas heaters.



Take Action Immediately

Living in damp or mouldy buildings increases the risk of health problems like respiratory symptoms, infections, allergic rhinitis, and asthma. Some people are more sensitive to mould, and certain groups are especially vulnerable.

Helping You Stay Safe

We aim to keep our homes safe and will regularly check for issues. You can help by taking preventative action or notifying us if a problem occurs.

DON'T DELAY

If you are experiencing damp, mould, or condensation in your home, please phone the repairs team:

01634 333601 or freephone 0800 073 0073

WINDOW VAC



Medway Council are in the process of identifying properties that may benefit from assistance with clearing condensation on the windows and windows sills.

Where condensation is left to accumulate, it can develop into damp where mould can form.

As part of the HRA One Medway Social Value Fund, Medway Council have purchased window vacs which will be offered to residents where it is identified, at an inspection by Medway Council or Mears, that condensation management assistance may be of benefit to the resident.

When a property is identified, Medway Council will send a letter to the resident offering a window vac on a loan basis.

Once the resident has accepted the window vac, they will be asked to sign a damage/loss disclaimer, and the window vac will be delivered to them. Each window vac will receive an annual inspection by a Medway Council officer to ensure it is good working order.

VALUED FEEDBA(K

We recently had some great feedback from a resident in Gillingham who had a front door fitted by contractor Bell Group. The resident praised the operatives for their hard work, commitment and professionalism:

> "I had the most amazing team come to fit my front door. They were respectful and friendly! They did the most uplifting high standard work replacing my door. To the point it's actually not just completed but they did it so that it's above the expectations! I honestly can't thank the two men that come to do it enough! They cleaned afterwards fully and without hesitation!"

HOW WE USE YOUR FEEDBACK

We undertake our annual tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) survey every Autumn. This survey gives you the chance to tell us what you think about the services we deliver to you.



What have we done since the last survey?

You told us you had concerns about antisocial behaviour (ASB)

In April we held a ASB consultation event at James Street with colleagues from the Community Safety Team.

We want to make sure that our estates are clean and well maintained

During March, we took part in the Great British Spring Clean campaign, collecting 39 bags of litter from 3 of our neighbourhoods.

We want to make sure your home is well maintained

We have raised over 50 responsive repairs that we identified through your individual survey feedback.

> Our next survey will be launched in September 2025, so make sure you look out for the invite and let us know what you think!



If you have taken part in one of our recent Big Door Knock surveys, you may have noticed that we collect data about you and your household. This helps us to deliver services that meet your needs.

Recently, two of our contractors Mears and Sureserve compliance worked together to coordinate a new kitchen install and a boiler install at the same time. It was important that these works were completed to a deadline, so it did not impact on an important religious festival for the residents.

Prize draw winners

If you take part in our door knock survey, you can opt in to our free prize draw for the chance to win a £50 voucher.

Congratulations to our recent winners, Janet from Twydall and Philomena from Gillingham.

We would like to thank everyone, who takes part in our surveys.



DEVELOPMENT UPDATE



<image>

LENNOX WOOD AND ABUROUND HOUSE TWYDALL

Perfect Homes Ltd are on track at Lennox Wood, they will be delivering 19 new 2, 3 and 6 bedroom homes.

Ecology works at Aburound House are underway and Perfect Homes Ltd will be starting construction works on site this summer to deliver 18 new 1 and 2 bedroom flats.



Our Phase 6 development in partnership with Medway Development Company (MDC) for the build of 44 flats for Affordable Rent is almost complete.

Available homes will be advertised on Home Choice for bidding by eligible households.

ANNUAL GAS SAFETY CHECKS

As a landlord, it is our legal obligation to ensure that all gas appliances in our properties are checked annually. This essential service helps maintain the safety and functionality of gas appliances, protecting both residents and properties.

Annual Gas Safety Checks and Servicing

Starting from the date of installation, gas appliance services, in conjunction with a gas safety check, will be carried out at residential properties at least every 12 months. Since March 2025, Sureserve Compliance South (SCS) has been responsible for all our annual gas servicing, breakdowns, and upgrades for all residential properties and schemes.

Appointment Scheduling

Our contractor, Sureserve Compliance, will send a letter for your annual check and service approximately 60 days before the current gas safety certificate expires.

- This letter will detail an appointment within the next 14 days.
- If you are unable to make the appointment, then contact Sureserve using the contact details within the letter.
- If a valid mobile phone number is held, a text message reminder is sent the day before the scheduled appointment.
- If the scheduled appointment is unable to take place, a second letter will be sent with another appointment.

Every effort will be made to work with residents to arrange appointments at convenient times. Only Gas Safe registered engineers will be used to undertake gas services or repairs, ensuring the highest standards of safety and professionalism. Typically, visits for gas servicing should last no longer than one hour.





Resident Responsibilities

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement, residents are required to:

- Allow the contractor access to complete the gas servicing.
- Keep appointments to ensure gas appliances are not faulty.
- Ensure their home remains safe for themselves and others living with them.

Contact Information

You can contact Sureserve Compliance South by phoning 01634 333 601

or **freephone 0800 073 0073** and selecting **option 1** for gas servicing and breakdowns. Alternatively, email SCS. **callcentre@sureserve.co.uk**

Online Account Registration

For added convenience, you can also register for an online account to book and manage appointments.

Visit Sureserve Compliance South to register and access this service: https://www.sureserve.co.uk/ support-for-residents/

MedwayGo



MedwayGo is the holiday activity programme in Medway providing activities, a healthy lunch and much more! MedwayGo activities are open to all.

Free places are available for children eligible for benefit related free school meals. A small number of free places are available for children that are not eligible for benefit related free school meals but have SEND needs. There are paid places on offer for those who are not eligible too.

This summer MedwayGo will be running activities from *Monday 28 July – Friday 22 August*. There will be a range of activities on offer that can be booked from *Monday 30 June 2025*.

Activities will include sports, music, arts and crafts, cooking and so much more. Each child will receive a hot nutritious meal. Families can also get support with travel, by accessing free bus tickets.

For more information, please visit: https://go.medway.gov.uk/book/ You can also visit our Facebook page for regular updates: https://www.facebook.com/ MedwayGoHAF

WE ARE PROUD MEMBERS OF TPAS

Don't miss out on your free membership benefits

We are proud members of Tpas because we believe that engaging and involving our tenants will help us find solutions to improve services, save money and bring lasting change to communities.

Visit: https://www.tpas.org.uk

Register your details with them to access training, regional networking events with other tenants and the latest housing involvement news straight to your email inbox.

They also operate a free enquiry service for those interested in getting the most out of your engagement activities - phone: **0800 731 1315** Proud members of





SOCIAL VALUE PROJECTS

Social value projects help build communities and neighbourhoods, benefiting Medway Council tenants and their families.

Previous social value projects have included:

- Refurbishing the Rainbow Room at Hazlemere Drive
- Installing benches at Centenary Gardens
- Gifting water butts to Homes for Independent Living

Have you got an idea for a social value project in your area?

For more information and to put your ideas forward visit:

Medway.gov.uk/HousingSocialValue

NEW GARDEN TOOL LOAN SCHEME

Would you like to do more in your garden but don't have the tools to do it?

Medway Council's **One Medway Social Value Initiative** now offers residents the use of garden tools on a fortnightly loan basis, delivered to you and collected by Medway Norse. This is all free to qualifying Medway Council HRA residents.

To be able to access this service, residents must have:

- A clear rent account or be keeping to a repayment plan
- No records of ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)
- Allowed us to carry out Gas Servicing and Planned Maintenance to your home without obstruction
- · Compliancy with your tenancy agreement

The tools that will be available to our residents are:

- Hover mower
 - Digging spade
 Rake
- Grass trimmer
- Hand tool set
 Hoe
- Heavy duty fork



The tools will receive a safety check prior to them being delivered to you and use of them is at your own risk. If you are unsure how to use any of the tools you request, please ask at the time you request them. Remember to always keep tools away from children.

A booking service will be available on a fortnightly loan basis with Medway Norse.

If you would like to book the use of the any of the above tools to do your gardening, you can do this by emailing your name, your address, contact details and date you would like the tools to be delivered and collected:

SocialValueProjects@Medway.gov.uk

ENTER OUR ANNUAL CARDEN COMPETITION

Run in partnership with Medway Norse there are opportunities for any tenant to bloom whether they have a balcony of pots or an urban oasis.



CLOSING 25 JULY 2025

To enter email **ResidentEngagement@medway.gov.uk** or speak to your scheme support officer.

CATEGORIES

BEST GARDEN Includes front and back gardens.

BEST HOMES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEME

This includes the communal garden areas at the eight HFIL schemes.

BEST COMMUNAL GARDEN/SPACE

Includes shared spaces - NOTE they must be fire safety compliant, and it does not include communal balconies/hallways which should be kept clear.

BEST USE OF A SMALL SPACE

For anyone with a very small garden or yard space.

BEST GROW YOUR OWN

For anyone growing their own fruit and vegetables, large or small just making use of the space they have.

BEST YOUNG GARDENER

For anyone under the age of 18.

BE CAUTIOUS OF DISREPAIR CLAIM ADS

You may have seen adverts from claims management companies encouraging tenants —especially in social housing—to make disrepair claims against landlords. These companies often contact people directly and may pass your case to a solicitor, potentially at a cost.

Risks include:

- Hidden fees
- Charges if you withdraw
- Time and stress involved

If you're unhappy with Medway Council's housing or repair services, please use our complaints process or call **01634 333601** to report a repair. We're committed to keeping your home safe and encourage you to contact us directly first.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

- Online at Medway.gov.uk/ HousingComplaints
- 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
- Or scan the QR code



MENU OF INVOLVEMENT

Tenants play a key role in shaping the services they receive. Everyone should have the chance to influence and improve our services, enhancing the quality of life in our neighbourhoods. Your involvement is crucial for making services better. It helps Housing Services adjust to tenants' needs, leading to positive outcomes for everyone.

There are many ways you can get involved, from a quick survey, attending a surgery or consultation event.

LIGHT BITES

Ideal for those that don't have much time to spare or who may struggle to attend meetings regularly. These include one-off involvement opportunities.

SOCIAL MEDIA — follow Medway Council Housing Services on Facebook, to keep up to date with the latest news and events.

HOUSING MATTERS – the Housing Matters newsletter is published every quarter and sent to all tenants.

SATISFACTION SURVEY – completing a survey is a quick and easy way to get involved and provide feedback.

WEBSITE — there is information on the Council's website to help you understand the service from complaints, repairs or previous copies of newsletters. You should be able to find everything you need here.

MAIN MEALS

This option means working with us to provide detailed feedback to help us shape our services. For example, you could take part in estate inspections.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKABOUTS – join your Neighbourhood Officer on an Estate Inspection. It's a great opportunity to engage in your local area.

ATTENDING A TENANT SURGERY – attending one if you can, is a great way to get involved, get advice and meet the Housing Team. We offer both an in person and virtual option.

COMMUNITY EVENTS OR POP-UP EVENTS – from litter picks to community days, attending an event is a great way to get involved, feedback your views and meet other members of the community.

ALL YOU CAN EAT

Support us with projects, influence key decisions and develop your skills. This may include joining our Tenants Panel, or a Focus Group.

FOCUS GROUPS — when there is a common topic or theme identified Housing Services will hold focus groups to gather feedback, develop ideas and create change.

TENANT PANEL — the Tenant Panel is an opportunity for tenants to work with us by reviewing, scrutinising and co-producing our services and activities. There are various roles within the panel that residents can undertake with training and development available. Meetings are quarterly with other ad-hoc meetings throughout the year. Transport can be arranged.

HOMES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING BOARD – Our Homes for Independent Living Board is a forum for those living within our eight schemes. Representatives from each scheme are able to raise concerns and find out more about our services. They provide a voice for residents and also help us communicate information. Meetings are quarterly and take place within one of the schemes, with transport provided.

LEASEHOLD FORUM — the Leasehold Forum is an opportunity for Leaseholders to discuss the service they receive and identify opportunities for improvement.

TAKEAWAY

THE BIG DOOR KNOCK — we will publicise when we are door knocking in your area. If you are happy to take part, simply wait for us to knock and we will complete a short survey on your doorstep. This will include checking any issues you may have and also any suggestions for improving our services or the local area.

To find out more about how you can be involved in improving our services please contact us by emailing **ResidentEngagement@Medway.gov.uk** or calling **01634 333344**.

CELEBRATING ST. ALBAN'S

We have recently delivered a project in partnership with Medway Adult Education, following our successful funding bid to Medway's Shared Prosperity Fund.

Medway Adult Education deliver workshops to over 70 pupils, at two local schools – Saxon Way and Rivermead.

The workshops encouraged the children to celebrate where they live and as a result, they have created beautiful collages showing an iconic Gillingham landmark.

The collages have been gifted to each school, so they can be admired for years to come.



Collage created by the children of Saxon Way Primary School

Ibans

Following on from this the housing team organised a community event at St. Alban's Close.

On the day residents were able to take part in creative activities, put forward ideas for community projects and vote on ideas for social value projects.

We also launched a bespoke activity trail created by local artist *Designed by Esther*.



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 TENANCY TEAM

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

Phone: 01634 333344 email: HousingTenancyTeam@Medway.gov.uk

HOUSING INCOME AND LEASEHOLD TEAM

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 tenancy 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



Serving You