



# TENANT NEWS

Edition 6  
Summer  
2023

## ANNUAL REPORT SPECIAL



Making improvements to your  
**homes and communities**

Complete our Survey to be in for a chance to win prizes totaling **£350!** See page 4 for details.

### What's in the magazine

- Find out what we have achieved this year
- We're giving away £350 in voucher prize draws!
- Day in the life of the Customer and Transaction Team
- How we're tackling Tenancy Fraud

# Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of our tenant newsletter which includes a summary of the information provided in our full 2023 Annual Report to Tenants. I hope you enjoy reading this and finding out more about how the housing service is continuing to make improvements to your homes and the communities you live in. If you want to read the full version of the Annual Report this can be found on our housing webpages.

In the last year there have been a number of important changes to the way in which social housing landlords operate. We have been working hard to make sure that our housing team are ready for these changes and you will find information in this magazine about how we plan to meet the new regulatory customer satisfaction standard. We have also been working hard to deal with those cases of damp and mould reported to us and an update on how

we are doing with this is included. Following the local elections on 4 May 23 there have been some changes to the political makeup of the Council and a new Leader has been appointed along with a new Cabinet and Portfolio Holders. I am very pleased to welcome Cllr Pam Brivio as the new Portfolio Holder for Housing and would like to take the opportunity to thank Cllr Derek Murphy for all his hard work and support of the housing team.

Once again I wanted to thank you all for your wonderful cooperation and feedback. The positive relationship that we have with you our customers will continue to remain at the heart of our housing service.



**Nadeem Aziz**  
Chief Executive

## Introduction to the new Housing Portfolio Holder

As the new Portfolio Holder for Housing and former housing manager, I am delighted to see information in this edition of Tenant News that highlights the dedication, commitment and resilience of both our staff and you our tenants and leaseholders.

The housing team continues to work exceptionally hard to maintain services and I am looking to the future with optimism as we plan how to improve our performance and services.

As a Dover resident I am familiar with many of our estates and often attend walkabouts with members of the housing team. I hope to continue to find time to do this and meet many of you in person. I want tenants and leaseholders to be at the heart of the services we provide and look forward to hearing your feedback so that we can work together on the issues that matter most to you.



**Cllr Pam Brivio**  
Housing Portfolio Holder

## How we've done

2022/23 in numbers



The Council has a total of  
**4344**  
social and affordable  
rented homes



The Council  
has let a total of  
**211**  
properties



The Council manages  
**33**  
Shared-ownership  
properties  
**(29 flats and 4 houses)**



We helped  
**63**  
households exchange  
homes via a Mutual  
Exchange



The average number  
of days to relet a  
property was  
**57.82**  
days, which is an  
improvement on the  
previous year, **70.68** days.



We had  
**28**  
right to buy  
applications and **21**  
properties purchased  
by tenants.



The Council manages  
**433**  
leasehold properties  
**(426 flats/maisonettes  
and 7 garages)**



Housing Management  
handled  
**15,651**  
incoming calls.  
With **129,323**  
website visits.

## Getting in touch

As usual you can call Mears for household and communal repairs on 0800 0234 320 or email [dover.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:dover.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk).


For central heating repairs call Gas Call Services on 0800 012 9958 or email [DDCcustomerservices@gascall.co.uk](mailto:DDCcustomerservices@gascall.co.uk).


We have launched a new online form, so you can quickly and easily, anytime of the day, let us know what we can do for you and all the information we need from you will be included in one place. There are lots of things you can do using the form, such as:

- Disabled Adaptations requests
- Rent or payment enquiry
- Leasehold or service charge enquiry
- Right to Buy enquiry
- Mutual Exchange enquiry
- Update your contact or household details

- Report ASB
- Make a complaint
- Enquiries about your tenancy
- Garage enquiries
- Report or follow up on a repair
- Property offer and viewing enquiries
- Grass cutting, cleaning or tree enquiries.

If you're unable to use our online form, you can always call us on:

 **01304 801084 for Housing Management enquires only.**

 **01304 801110 for property enquiries only, including ongoing repairs, permissions and planned work such as roofs, kitchens etc.**

Lines are open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays). Lines will remain open for out of hours emergencies only.

In addition to this newsletter, you can subscribe to our 'Keep Me Posted' updates, make sure you tick 'Housing for tenants'.

# Regulator for Social Housing's new consumer standards

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has finalised new consumer standards that include tenant satisfaction measures that social landlords, including DDC, will be expected to meet.

DDC will conduct an annual survey with tenants, and collect data to report to the Regulator on issues such as repairs' timescales, numbers of safety checks undertaken, numbers of ASB cases etc. The Regulator has, in turn, been given more powers

to hold landlords to account and ensure that we're doing everything correctly.

The results of thousands of tenant surveys completed by Social Landlords across the country will be compiled by the

Regulator nationally, along with our data, to check performance standards.

Our housing team will also use the results locally to directly inform any service improvements.

## Tenant Survey and Estate Events

Your Housing Officer and members of the Housing Services team are coming to an area near you this summer; come along and meet them! We will be there to speak to you about any concerns or questions, and there will also be copies of our tenant survey for you to complete on the day.

We want to hear your feedback about the Housing Service. Fill in our survey for one of 3 chances to win!



Type in this URL [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DDC-2023](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DDC-2023) or scan the QR code.



survey and pre paid envelope if you prefer not to complete it online. Please feel free to include our tear off slip updating your tenancy details in with the survey if you wish and return it in the pre paid envelope.

A prize draw will be held after the closing date and winners will be contacted via the details you provide. To be entered, you must leave your contact details. You can read the Terms and Conditions and our privacy notice on our website.

think. This survey will close on 01 September 2023

We have included with this newsletter a paper copy of the

This survey should only take around 5 minutes to complete.

We have prizes totaling £350 in vouchers (1x £200, 1x £100 and 1 x £50) as a 'thank you' for giving up your time to tell us what you

**Come along to your local estate event. All events are from 10am-12pm.**

Area	Date	Where
Dover Town	29/06/2023	At the gazebo in front of Pencester Court
St. Radigunds Road	04/07/2023	At the gazebo next to the teen shelter in Barwick Road
Sandwich	06/07/2023	At the gazebo on the green in Laburnum Avenue
Buckland Estate	11/07/2023	At the gazebo on the green along Roosevelt Road
Green Lane	24/07/2023	At the gazebo on the green near to the play park/Hirst Close end
Military Hill	31/07/2023	At the gazebo in the car park to the rear of York House
Stockdale	08/08/2023	At the gazebo on the green beside 55 Stockdale Gardens
Elvington	10/08/2023	At the gazebo on the green opposite 5 Cherry Grove
Shooters Hill	05/09/2023	At the gazebo in the car park beside block 15 - 20 Erith Street
Freemens Way	13/09/2023	At the gazebo on the green in front of Charles House in Telegraph Road

## Dover District Council Housing Services

# Who's Who



To speak to the Officers in your area you can call **01304 801084** and select the option suitable for your enquiry.

The Duty line is manned by our Housing Officers on a rota system. The Duty Staff member may be able to answer your query, but if not, they will pass it on to the team member who can best assist you.

### Housing Officers

#### Andy Friend

- Tower Hamlets and St Radigunds
- Canadian Estate
- Villages: Martin, Whitfield, Guston, East Langdon, Ashley, Shepherdswell, Tilmanstone, Nonington, Coldred, Aycliffe, Capel-le-Ferne, Church Hougham, Temple Ewell and Alkham.



#### Flora Evans

- Dover Town
- Aylesham
- Villages: Eythorne and Elvington, Wingham, Preston, Staple, Stourmouth, Goodnestone, Shatterling and Ash

#### Faye Martinez

- North and Middle Deal
- Upper Deal
- Villages: Sholden, Walmer, Kingsdown, Ringwould and St Margaret's

#### Denise Knight & Theresa Spelzini

- Sandwich
- Buckland and Green Lane
- Melbourne and South African Estate
- Villages: East Studdal, Ripple, Northbourne, Woodnesborough, Worth, Hacklinge and Eastry

#### Geoff Robinson

- St Monicas
- Shooters Hill, George St, Erith St. and Herbert St.

### Assistant Housing Officers (Estates)

A big welcome to **Alison Baughan** who has recently joined the Housing Team as an Assistant Housing Officer (Estates).

Our Assistant Housing Officers (Estates) **Hayley Rose** and **Alison Baughan** are out on our estates

every day, carrying out visual inspections, health and safety checks and visiting our housing blocks.

They monitor the cleaning contractors, work closely with DDC grounds maintenance and

waste teams and serve notices to enforce safety requirements.

If you see them in your area, say 'Hello' and let them know if you have any questions or concerns.

### Assistant Housing Officers

Our Assistant Housing Officers **Rebecca Willoughby Reed** and **Hannah Allen** are responsible for

our lettings process, you might meet them if you move to a new Council home.

## Housing Officers (Anti-social Behaviour)

The ASB officers deal with more serious nuisance cases and usually manage cases in a particular patch. They prepare cases for court if needed. They may attend properties to gather reports, install sound recording equipment, manage ASB cases, obtain injunctions and provide support for victims and vulnerable perpetrators.

**Pat Turley** covers Dover and Whitfield, Martin, East Langdon, East Studdal, Guston, St Margaret's, Ringwould, Ashley, Aycliffe, Capel, Temple Ewell, Alkham and Church Hougham.

**Simon Drew** covers Deal, Walmer, Sandwich and Aylesham, Eythorne and Elvington, Kingsdown, Sholden, Ripple, Worth, Northbourne, Hacklinge, Ash, Eastry, Woodnesborough, Coldred, Goodnestone, Nonington,

Shepherdswell, Tilmanstone, Preston, Shatterling, Staple, Stourmouth and Wingham.



## Independent Living Managers

Our ILM's look after our Independent Living Schemes and residents, doing everything from sign ups, viewings, health

and safety checks, to liaising with contractors/ external agencies and signposting.

Our ILM's are **Julie Peters, Fiona Young, Kerstin Darkes, Tanya Philpott** and **Kate Pawlica**.

## Customer and Transactions Team

The Customer and Transactions Team provide administrative support for the housing service. Please see the 'Day in the life'

article all about their role.

**Natalie Vince**  
**Michelle Barber**

**Carina Wilson**  
**Gemma Fletcher**

## Income Recovery Team

Our Income Recovery Team monitor our rent accounts and help residents to sustain their payments and their tenancies whilst avoiding debt or court action.

**For information about your rent and help available, visit the rents section of our website.**

**To contact the Income Recovery Team call 01304 801084 and select option 1.**

### Income Collection/Recovery Officers

**Vacant Post,**  
Income Collection Officer

Area: CT13, 15, 18, CT17 9H plus CT16 2D

**Janet Glanville,**  
Income Recovery Officer

Area: CT3

**Graeme Cook,**  
Income Recovery Officer

Area: CT17 9A/9B/9E/9L/9R/9S/9Q plus CT16 2R/2S

**Christine Sayer,**  
Income Collection Officer

Area: CT14 plus CT16 2B/2H

In monitoring rent accounts, the Income Recovery/Collection

Officers undertake a variety of tasks including taking payments, providing basic money and benefit advice, and negotiating payment arrangements and methods. Sometimes, it is also necessary that they must issue notices and prepare legal paperwork with our legal team to recover possession of our properties.

**Jennifer Owen** covers the postcode areas: CT3, CT13, CT14, CT16 2B & 2D.

**Marie Kent** covers the postcode areas: CT15, CT16 (but not 2B or 2D), CT17 & CT18.

## Benefit & Money Advisors

Our two benefit and money advisors offer our tenants support to stay in their home and avoid rent arrears by providing welfare benefit education and money/ financial inclusion advice.

*Jennifer and Marie* strive to support tenants in maximising their income and addressing rent arrears. Last year, their work benefited our tenants through claim corrections, benefit maximisation, grant applications, signposting and collaborative work to over £1million.

# Hearing how we've done

**We are rolling out more 'transactional' surveys, these are 'on the spot' surveys designed to hear your views about a service just after it's happened.**

You might already receive these from your GP, following a hospital appointment or even after a contractor visits. They're useful for the service provider to know

how they've performed and what improvements can be made.

We'll contact you directly to do one of these, we currently have

them running for lettings, ASB and complaints. If you have any time, please let us know what you think, whatever your thoughts.

## What do you think of this newsletter?

We'd love to hear what you think of this newsletter. Would you like to be featured? Have you got a story which you'd like your fellow residents to hear about?



surveymonkey.  
co.uk/r/DDC-News  
or scan this code

## How we've done - 2022/23 income in numbers

£21,027,972

in collectable rent  
(21/22 £20,087,343)

1.42%

of rent is in arrears  
(21/22 2.13%)

Benefit and Money Advisors helped

1214

households (21/22 595)

### A closer look at:

# Marriage Tax Allowance

**Could you be missing out on £252 per year?**

**Marriage Tax Allowance lets you transfer £1,260 of your Personal Allowance to your husband, wife or civil partner.**

Reducing your Personal Allowance increases your partner's. This reduces the tax they pay by up to £252 (2023/24). In most cases, this would apply where one partner is a stay at home parent on limited income, may have a disability, health condition or caring commitment that limits their working hours/ income, or who may have retired whilst the remaining partner continues with significant employment or has a greater retirement income.

You can benefit from Marriage Allowance if all the following apply:

- You're married or in a civil partnership
- You do not pay Income Tax or your income is below your Personal Allowance (usually £12,570)
- Your partner pays Income Tax at the basic rate, which usually means their income is between £12,571 and £50,270 before they receive Marriage Allowance

It's free to apply and you can do so on the government website: [www.gov.uk/apply-marriage-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/apply-marriage-allowance)

This can apply to working age, mixed age and pension age couples.

If the lower earner were to return to work, increase their employment income or receive additional income, they will pay tax on any income over the new (lowered) tax allowance.

A closer look at:

# Changes to Bereavement Support Allowance/Widowed

On 9 February 2023 the Government changed the rules to allow cohabiting couples to be considered for support at the time of bereavement if there were children in the household – these allowances had previously only been provided to couples who were married or in a civil partnership.

If your partner has passed away you may now be eligible to make a retrospective claim for benefit.\* Please see advisory note

Households where a cohabiting partner passed away on or after 6 April 2017 and where the surviving partner was under State Pension Age, pregnant or responsible for a child/children and entitled to apply for Bereavement Support Allowance. This payment would be made for up to 18 months.

(Payments cease after 18 months duration).

Households where a cohabiting partner passed away prior to 6 April 2017 and where the surviving partner was under State Pension Age, pregnant or responsible for a child/children and entitled to claim Child Benefit are invited to apply for Widowed Parents Allowance. This payment would have been made to the surviving partner until such time as they entered a new cohabiting

relationship, married or entered a civil partnership, stopped being entitled to Child Benefit or reached State Pension Age. (Payments cease upon a change of circumstance).

If this change to legislation means that YOU may have been entitled, you should contact the Bereavement Service Helpline on 0800 151 2012 by 8 February 2024 for more advice.

\* Advisory note: You should also be aware that other benefit entitlements may be affected by a claim for either of these benefits. Widowed Parents Allowance is a taxable source of income and counted as such for the purposes of Tax Credits and Universal Credit. Claiming a backdated sum could see a recalculation of other benefits awarded in the interim. If you have any of the Bereavement Support Payment lump sum (1st payment) left after 1 year this too may affect later claims for other benefits. Claiming a backdated entitlement may cause an historic overpayment of other benefits in payment. If you are concerned, you should seek specialist advice before making a claim.

## How we've done

### Customer Care

Between April 2022 and March 2023, we received 14 compliments.

"The people had all been fantastic and since moving to the property he and his wife have been sleeping better. He said it feels like 'being reborn' and they feel much safer and want to thank everyone involved for the opportunity"

"In the Years that We have lived here the place has never looked this good. Also Thanks to Frank and the Team for getting the rest of the pavement repaired properly."

"Huge thank you to ILM Fiona, for her empathy and kindness in being welcomed into the scheme"

## Repairs & maintenance

### Planned works



- Windows replaced in 10 properties
- Roof replaced 48

- 10 Door entry system installations
- 157 Bathrooms Replaced

- External decorations to 242 properties.

### Disabled adaptations approved and installed:

- 6 - Level Access Shower
- 7 - Drop Down Rails
- 22 - Stairlifts

- 18 - Ramp Accesses
- 188 - Grab/Hand/ Bannister Rails

- 39 - Flush Floor Showers
- 11 - Overbath Showers

### Repairs:

- £2.3m total spend on repairs in the year (£1.51m last year)
- 88.59% number of repairs completed on time

- 12,038 number of routine repairs completed in the year
- 97.76% of appointments kept by Mears

- 89% satisfaction with repairs
- 20.18 average number of days taken to complete routine repairs.

### Damp and mould

We mentioned in the tenants' Christmas newsletter that we are encouraging tenants to report damp and mould and we have received lots of responses where we have now visited, assessed and repairs have been either raised or completed.

356 damp and mould cases were reported which will receive a minimum of 3 inspections each (1st initial diagnosis, 2nd post inspection of work complete, 3rd follow up to ensure remedial work was effective. This will involve a total of 1068 inspections.

308 cases have had their 1st diagnosis inspection and work ordered. 232 works orders have been completed. The total cost of

work ordered up until 31 March 2023 is £122k

Of the cases reported the cause of damp was 95% condensation and 5% due to building issues.

Less than 10% of the properties suffering from condensation required other work such as insulation or the installation of extract fans.

We have created hand outs

and there is information on our website to help residents reduce moisture in their homes and to understand the causes and resolution to damp in the home.

**If you have any issues with excess moisture, please search 'damp' on our website for helpful tips.**

## Safe and Secure

- **100%** of properties have valid gas safety certificates (last year 100%)
- **98.54%** of properties have up-to-date electrical certificate – access is preventing 100% (last year 87.06%)
- **100%** of water systems tested and safe (last year 96%)
- **100%** of fire risk assessments are up to date (last year 100%)
- **100%** asbestos surveys in communal areas (last year 100%).



## Broadband Upgrades

Over the next few months, DDC will be granting access to telecommunications companies to upgrade the cabling to provide more customers with access to high-speed fiber optic broadband in blocks of flats and schemes.

The companies involved will be deciding in which areas they roll out full fibre broadband but hopefully our tenants and

leaseholders will benefit from access to this and potentially lower cost tariffs and broadband packages. You will not be

required to give contractors access to your flat unless you have chosen to subscribe to a broadband service directly.



**If you are ever concerned about workmen or operatives in or around your block, you can ask them to show you ID and/or call our maintenance team to verify their identity and that they've gained permission to undertake works.**

## Antisocial Behaviour and Estate Services

Our Assistant Housing Officers (Estates), Hayley and Alison spend their time visiting blocks continuously on rotation to check for defects, maintenance or cleanliness issues and ensure compliance with Fire Regulations. The number of block inspections completed over the year is 1773 internal inspections and 1683 external inspections.

If you see Hayley or Alison out and about, please say hello, and feel free to identify any concerns or queries you may have.

Our ASB team work solely on a caseload of ASB cases, supporting complainants and with the aim to ultimately help residents enjoy

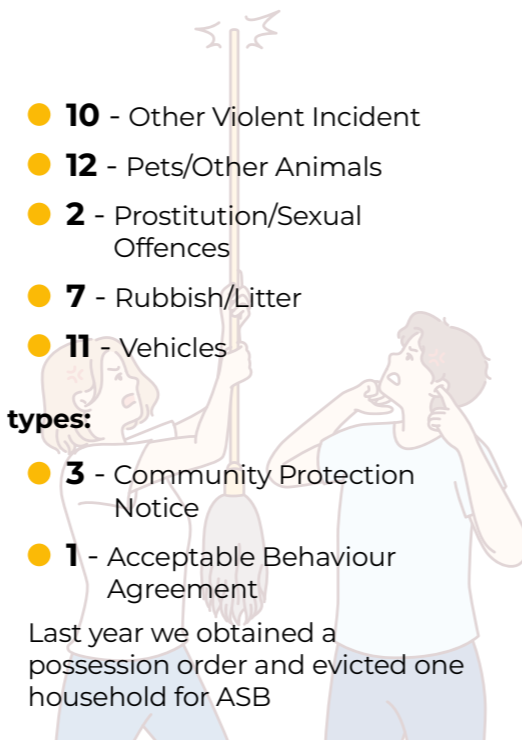
their homes without fear, noise or harassment. Total ASB cases investigated in 2022/23 were 370.

### ASB cases by type included:

- **11** - Alcohol Abuse
- **3** - Communal Areas/Loitering
- **25** - Criminal Damage/Vandalism
- **14** - Domestic Abuse
- **32** - Drugs
- **19** - Garden Nuisance
- **66** - Harassment/Threats
- **7** - Hate Crime
- **103** - Noise
- **9** - Not ASB
- **39** - Other Criminal Behaviour

### We use our powers to intervene when needed, which include these types:

- **1** - Right To Review
- **4** - Notice of Seeking Possession
- **1** - Injunction
- **1** - Extension of Introductory Tenancy Period
- **5** - Community Protection Warning



Last year we obtained a possession order and evicted one household for ASB

- **10** - Other Violent Incident
- **12** - Pets/Other Animals
- **2** - Prostitution/Sexual Offences
- **7** - Rubbish/Litter
- **11** - Vehicles

- **3** - Community Protection Notice
- **1** - Acceptable Behaviour Agreement

# The cost of fly-tipping

An area that is heavily littered or fly-tipped gives the impression of increased crime levels and safety concerns. It also encourages others to dump their rubbish there.

Fly-tipping costs DDC many thousands of pounds each year. Fly-tipping in our estates and blocks is cleared using the money we collect from rent and service charges and could be better spent on maintaining the communal grounds, blocks or individual property maintenance.

Dover District Council is working to combat fly-tipping and other waste crime offences.

Unfortunately, in many instances, rubbish is fly-tipped by tenants very near to their home.

We know it is only a small minority of people who don't take care of

our district. We rely on your help to bring prosecutions and stop those who continue to dump waste in the Dover District. Please help us by reporting fly-tipping and other environmental crimes.

### If you see someone fly-tipping, make a note of:

- How many people are involved and what they look like
- What has been tipped - how much and what it looks like
- Details of any vehicles involved including make, colour and registration number if possible.
- **Report fly tipping on our website, just search 'Report Fly Tipping' on [www.dover.gov.uk](http://www.dover.gov.uk)**

### If you discover fly-tipped waste:

- Don't touch the waste - it may contain syringes, toxic chemicals or other hazardous substances
- Don't disturb the site - there may be evidence that could help identify the fly tippers and lead to their prosecution
- Visually try to work out what the waste consists of and how much there is
- Make a note of the day, date and time you saw the tipping, its exact location and whether it's in or near water
- Take a photo if it's safe and possible to do so.



**Remember fly-tippers are doing something illegal; they are unlikely to welcome people observing them or taking notes or photographs. Your safety is paramount – you should not confront any active fly-tipping activity nor put yourself in danger. Incidents of fly-tipping can be quickly and easily reported to the council using the details below and we will investigate.**

### How you can safely and legally get rid of unwanted items

- Is it worth something? Try listing it on Facebook Marketplace, Vinted, eBay, Gumtree, Shpock or similar sites
- Is it still usable? Advertise it for free online or why not donate it to charity? Red Cross and Emmaus can collect items of furniture from your home. Or take it down to your nearest charity shop
- Is it broken, undesirable or unusable? Pop it in your black household waste bin, take it to your local tip, or you can pay for a waste collection. (Just make sure if you engage a private waste collector that they have

a waste carriers license so you know they will responsibly dispose of the waste – check here: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>



## Increasing supply

Dover District Council is committed to delivering an ambitious programme of new Council housing which will see the highest number of new Council homes built in a generation.

This provision of new affordable housing is a key element of the Government's plan to end the housing crisis and tackle homelessness.

Over the coming years, we plan to increase the number of new affordable homes we provide in the district ourselves. We have recently had the pleasure of welcoming residents to the new build properties in Whitfield.

See photos of Andy Friend and



Gemma Fletcher meeting the new residents.

This site included 26 new, affordable homes which were



available to bid on and subsequently offered via Kent Homechoice.

Also completed within the last year have been 6 properties at Jute Fields, Deal and interim accommodation with 8 properties at Elizabeth Carter Court, Deal and 16 properties at Water Hammond Close in Dover.

## Love your home

When we give you your keys to your home, there is nothing more rewarding for us than to see you take care of it and make it your own. We are lucky to visit some lovely properties and residents who take pride in their home and garden.

This doesn't have to cost a fortune and we thought we'd share some

examples of inspiration to see what you can do with your home.



Before...



...After

### Permission

**You don't need our permission to redecorate your home, this is your responsibility, to paint and decorate to your taste, but we do expect your home to be kept to a reasonable standard.**

We do ask however that you do not remove any fixtures and fittings and that you protect the fabric of the building by not making any changes. We will need to give permission for larger works and changes, so **please give us a call on 01304 801110 if you require any guidance. A maintenance Inspector will visit you to inspect before permission is granted.**



Before...



...After

## Tenancy fraud

**Most people applying for housing wait their turn to be allocated a home based on their need, with some people sofa surfing or struggling in difficult circumstances until they are able to be offered accommodation. Housing cheats don't wait and aren't in the greatest need, they jump the queue. It's not fair.**

There isn't an abundance of social housing in this country so it is important that fraudsters do not use up valuable housing spaces which deprive those in greater need.

We work hard to ensure that fraudsters don't prosper and we investigate every case we suspect. If you think someone has moved out (left a property empty or given the property to family/friends),

sublet to a third party, may be renting out via Airbnb (or similar) or has given false information to obtain a tenancy, PLEASE let us know.

### How we've done

**Our team has been successful in tackling housing fraud this year, with 4 tenancies being terminated and returned to the council to relet to deserving people on the Council waiting list.**

A further 3 tenants have been invited to interview amongst other investigations. We will continue to tackle tenancy fraud and return properties to those most deserving.



Scan this QR code to read our Tenancy Fraud Policy or report Tenancy Fraud.



## A government initiative

**There is exciting news for social housing tenants up and down the country.**

Backed by £500,000 government funding, the government has launched the 'Four Million Homes' programme which encourages tenants to take an active role in how their homes are managed, with advice on how to set up a resident's panel. The programme includes free advice for residents, free webinars and free training events.

Visit the website for more information; [www.fourmillionhomes.org](http://www.fourmillionhomes.org).



# Taking responsibility

**We strive to ensure your home is kept to a decent standard, we do this by providing responsive repairs, planned maintenance and electrical and gas safety inspections. We are also responsible for Disabled Adaptations of properties and repairs whilst properties are empty.**

If you want to carry out improvements to your home please contact us to get permission. This may include laying a patio in the garden,

to putting in a new kitchen or knocking down a wall. We will always recommend you purchase home contents insurance; this is to protect your

belongings in the event of a fire, damage, burglary etc. Money supermarket estimate this to cost as little on average as £76 per year which spread monthly is less than £7 per month.

## Our repair responsibilities to you:

- **Looking after the structure of your home** - we are responsible for repairing and maintaining the structure
- **Gas safety** - We need to carry out an annual safety check and service of every gas or solid fuel fuel heating system – please make sure you allow us access to do this important safety check.

- **The outside of your home** - This includes looking after your chimney, roof, drains, gutters, outside pipes, outside doors and windows including their frames



- **Inside your home** - Plaster work (excluding minor surface cracks), internal plumbing, power and lighting, carpentry such as floors and stairs (but not kitchen / bathroom units or cupboards).

- **The area around your home** - This covers the front path or steps leading to your home and any shared areas of the building your home may be part of – such as a garage or a public area like stairwells, entrances or shed area.

- **If you live in a flat** - We maintain communal door entry systems, communal TV / satellite systems and lifts as well as stairwells, windows and doors.

**Our repair contractors deal with a wide range of household repairs but some repairs may be your responsibility to fix.**

## Your responsibilities for General Repairs and Maintenance including:

**You must report any repair we are responsible for as soon as possible.**

- All decorations inside your home including replacing broken tiles.
- Making sure your double glazed windows and doors are regularly maintained, cleaned and oiled to keep them working properly
- Minor repairs to internal doors and frames.

- Repairing or replacing locks, and door furniture.
- Repairing and adjusting kitchen units, cupboards, drawers, doors, shelves and worktops
- Repairing and maintaining meter boxes
- Pest control to keep your home free of rats, mice and fleas



## Your responsibilities for Plumbing and drainage including:

- Clearing blockages in sinks, baths and wastepipes
- Replacing washers on dripping taps and broken toilet seats

- Replacing the chain and plugs on sinks, baths and basins
- Replacing the grids over drains
- Clearing any blockages in

external gullies (except in shared areas to flats)

- Clearing blocked toilets if you live in a house or bungalow

## Your responsibilities for Electrics including:

- Replacing light bulbs and fluorescent tubes and starters
- Testing and cleaning your smoke alarm and replacing the batteries

**Remember:** If you require any other electrical work, this must be completed by a qualified electrical contractor who will issue a minor works certificate. DDC require a copy of the certificate and this should be sent by email to: [housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk)

**We try to keep our properties in the best condition possible but there are times when some things will need to be repaired.**

**We rely on tenants to report repairs to ensure that they are fixed as soon as possible and do not become worse or cause further problems with you home. To read our repair journey, please visit our website and search 'repair journey'.**



**Your Repair Journey (dover.gov.uk)**





Day in the life of

# Customers & Transactions Team

We have 4 Customer and Transactions Officers, they are Carina, Gemma, Michelle and Natalie. They play a vital role in our Housing Team and are responsible for a wide range of tasks that keep the team organised and help keep residents informed.

Some of their tasks include answering phone calls, managing the housing@dover.gov.uk email inbox, filing and uploading documents, logging and responding to website forms, managing garages, administering mutual exchanges, collecting keys from reception, key tracking and organising post.

They are responsible for responding to enquiries from multiple channels and forwarding requests to the relevant departments and ensuring that all communication is properly recorded and documented.

The team manages garages by administering the waiting list, requesting for garages to be cleared, actioning licence terminations and arranging 'pack and stacks'.



They also manage mutual exchanges for our tenants, through HomeSwapper and carry out the landlord related tasks behind the scenes. This includes coordinating the exchange of properties between tenants, and ensuring that all documentation is properly completed and filed.

Collecting keys from reception and tracking them is also an important task as they ensure that all keys are accounted for, and that they

are properly labelled, tracked and stored. Your tenancy may not end if your keys are not logged as received on time; and we may not be able to relet a property if the keys are not recovered following Voids work.

Michelle works Thursdays and Fridays and uses her time staffing the Duty phone line, which is the main Housing phone line for tenants. If you call us on these days, you might have spoken to her!

We appreciate all of their hard work and dedication and we hope that this has given you a better understanding of what they do on a daily basis. See the photo which should help you put a face to their names. Left to right; Natalie, Michelle, Gemma and Carina.



# Customer Service Standards

In January 2023, Dover District Council introduced a new customer service charter, which is our promise to residents and sets out how we will deal with you as customers.

Our goal is to handle enquiries promptly, efficiently, and courteously. So, when we contact you, we promise to be professional and polite, use plain language, resolve enquiries as quickly as possible, protect personal information, be transparent, and welcome feedback.

Specific aims include acknowledging or responding

to all emails within 2 days, letters within 5 days and we will let you know if we need more time to respond fully.

The service standards cover various communication channels, such as digital services, email and letters, telephone, social media, virtual and in-person meetings, and home visits.

We try to ask customers to use digital services where possible and we are always looking to create easier and more efficient ways for you to access our services. In turn, we aim to use email and digital methods wherever possible to avoid delay. We also ask that residents attend appointments on time and treat staff with courtesy and respect.

## Complaints

- Received an average of 3 stage 1 complaints per month for Housing Management and 7 Housing Assets
- Housing Management responded to 100% of all stage 1 complaints within the 10 working day standard
- DDC handled 7 escalated complaints at stage 2 of our complaints process for Housing Management, of which 43% were upheld
- DDC responded to 77% of all Properties Stage 1 complaints (Responsive Repairs, Capital Works, Voids, Assets and Compliance) within the prescribed 10 working days
- DDC upheld 53% of complaints made at stage 1 (where we accepted fault, apologised and fixed the issue)
- DDC handled 20 escalated complaints at stage 2 of our complaints process for Asset Management of which 6 are still open but of the 14 closed, 64% were upheld
- A total of 2 Housing Ombudsman cases were investigated.

# Get involved

We have multiple ways you can get involved and influence us.

From being an active member of our volunteer groups, coming along to a focus group meeting, giving feedback on a service you've received or just by subscribing to and reading our Keep Me Posted updates, or newsletters, all your views and input are valuable.

## How We've Done

- **685** - Keep Me Posted subscribers
- **13** - Number of DDTCCG meetings
- **3** - Scrutiny Meetings
- **5** - Coffee Mornings and Estate Events

## Keeping updated

Want to hear updates on your housing service more often than these printed newsletters? Why not subscribe to our Keep Me Posted email bulletins?

With a large choice of topics to choose from, ranging from Kearsney Parks, to Deal Pier, to What's on and even updates on your bin collections.

For news and updates from

the housing team about your Landlord service. Tick 'Housing For Tenants' under 'Your Council' section.

If you want to go back and read any past editions of the

Newsletter, Annual Reports or other publications, please find our 'Publications' page on our website. Just click on 'Publications' from the 'Housing for tenants' main page.

## Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group

The Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group (DDTCG) is a local group of Dover District Council tenants and leaseholders.

They are a non-political Group that represent the views and interests of tenants and leaseholders across the Dover District. They are independent, and work closely with DDC as a consultative body to resolve issues and recommend improvements to the service.



The DDTCCG are looking for new members! Please get in touch.

Do you have 2 hours every 6 weeks to spare?

Are you passionate about your community and local issues?



Come along to a meeting and see what you think. No pressure to sign up. Contact Beth Becks for more information on [Tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk](mailto:Tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk).

# Please let us in!

DDC spend thousands of pounds every year on missed appointments, this is because we are not given access or the resident is not home. This wasted money and energy could be much better used to improve the service for our tenants.

As a tenant, it is important you feel that your property is your home and we support you to feel comfortable in your space. You have many rights and responsibilities when it comes to giving us access to your home and these are set out in the tenancy agreement you signed at the start of your tenancy.



proposed visits, unless it is an emergency, in which case DDC or an authorised representative may enter the property without your prior consent. If we do not have any means to contact you and you have failed to acknowledge written communications, we may need to attend unannounced.

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement, you are required to allow council employees, their authorised agents, and contractors to enter your property at reasonable hours on request for the purposes of inspecting the property or carrying out any necessary works.

carrying out inspections, gas safety checks, electrical safety checks, repairs or improvements that may be necessary, inspecting neighbouring properties, or discussing any issues relating to your tenancy.

Please remember that you have the right to request identification from anyone who wishes to enter your property, and you should not allow access to anyone who cannot provide satisfactory proof of their identity.

DDC and our contractors may need to access your home for a variety of reasons, including

It is important to note that these visits must be made at reasonable times, and you should be given prior notice of any

Please make every effort to be available for our appointments and let us know if you're unable to attend so we can reschedule for a more convenient time.

# Are your details up to date?

We don't store a lot of information on our residents, but what we do store we generally collect at the time you move into your property. This means that we may have information about you that isn't up to date.

You don't need to update us, however if we don't have your current phone number or email address, we might struggle to contact you.

to deal with mutual exchanges, successions, and other housing matters.

Statement' at the bottom of the page.

Equally, if you moved in with 1 child and you now have had more or you have a new partner, it is useful for us to have accurate records so we are better equipped

We have updated our privacy notice which explains how we manage and store your data in accordance with GDPR and keep it safe. To read it, please visit our website and click on 'Privacy

If you have a universal credit or benefits claim, your claim must be in the same name as the name we hold against your tenancy, to avoid any issues with housing benefit and Universal Credit payments.



To update your records with us, it's simple. You can either call us on our general Housing Management phone line 01304 801084 or fill in a simple form on page 8 of the enclosed survey to update your details and return it using the freepost envelope provided.

You can do it quickly online here: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DDC-Update-Details](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DDC-Update-Details).

# Tenant Survey 2023



## We want to hear what you think about our housing service through the launch of our new tenant survey.

The survey forms part of new measures by the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure consumer standards are being met by social landlords, like DDC.

This includes tenant satisfaction and so now is your chance to have your say on issues such as

how long it takes for the council to carry out repairs, the condition of your home and your general experience of living in a DDC property.

The survey takes no more than five minutes to complete and as a 'thank you' for giving up your

time we have prizes totalling £350 up for grabs.

A prize draw will be held after the closing date of 1 September with three prizes.

### For more information, or to complete the survey, please see the following:



- Scan the QR code to visit [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DDC-2023](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DDC-2023)
- Visit 'Housing For Tenants' page on our website
- Call 01304 801084, press 8 to speak to the Duty Housing Officer and ask to complete the survey over the phone
- Complete the paper copy of the survey and send back in freepost envelope provided