

October 2020

TENANT NEWS

Welcome
to your
housing
service!

Hear about our
priorities for
the future

Find out how
you can get
involved



Working together - June Bailey from the Dover District Tenant Group and Cllr Derek Murphy, DDC Cabinet Member for Housing are pictured outside the council offices in Whitfield

Welcome

Message from June Bailey from the Dover District Tenant Group

June said: "I am looking forward to working with Dover District Council and continuing to represent the tenants. There may be a few hiccups at first but they will quickly be cured as we all adapt to a different way of doing things.

Privacy notice

Dover District Council is a data controller under GDPR. We process your personal data in compliance with data protection legislation. For more information on how we collect, process and protect your personal data and for information on your rights, please visit our website at www.dover.gov.uk/privacy to view our corporate and housing service privacy notices, which can also be located below.

Corporate Privacy Notice:

www.dover.gov.uk/Website/360022-Corporate-Privacy-Notice.pdf

Housing Service Privacy Notice:

www.dover.gov.uk/Website/Housing-Service.pdf

Information on the processing and transfer of personal data from East Kent Housing to Dover District Council during the transition period can be found here on the housing homepage at www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Home.aspx.

If you would like a copy of these Privacy Notices in another format e.g. hard copy, or if you have any questions about these Privacy Notices, please contact us on **01304 821199**, alternatively you can email dataprotection@dover.gov.uk.



**Cllr Trevor Bartlett,
Leader of Dover District Council**

Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive

Introduction

From 1 October 2020, Dover District Council will be taking over from East Kent Housing to deliver your housing services.

This is the perfect opportunity to take a fresh look at how we do things to ensure you are as happy with the service we provide as possible.

Improving services for our tenants and leaseholders is our key priority and although we know this won't happen overnight, we hope you will start to notice the changes we are making.

While we are committed to improvement, some things won't change - the council is still your landlord, the same contractors will still be dealing with your repairs and maintenance, and many of the staff you deal with will be the same staff you dealt with at East Kent Housing.

We are determined to focus on the things that are most important to you. When we asked you last year what our top priorities should be, you said:

- Dealing with repairs and maintenance
- Providing value for money
- Dealing with customer enquiries and complaints

As we start to directly manage our housing, we will keep those three things at the forefront of our minds as we try to build a modern, responsive and caring service that listens to its tenants and does the very best it can for them. This newsletter is our chance to say hello, let you know the best person to contact when you need our help, and explain our priorities for the future.

We hope it will be the first of many. We are proud to be supporting you in the years ahead and we hope very soon you will be proud to be Dover District Council tenants.

YOUR TENANCY SERVICES TEAM

Our housing officers are responsible for distinct geographical areas of the district, often called 'patches' and will offer advice, support and help to the tenants who live in the area they manage.

Louise Taylor
Strategic Housing Manager

Verity Johnson
Housing Manager

Helen Ayers
Income Recovery Manager

Beth Eddolls
Tenant Involvement and Improvement Officer

Housing Management team

Independent Living team

Customer and Systems team

Income collection team

What do we do?

Housing Management team

Our housing management team are responsible for:

- Letting empty homes
- Visiting new tenants to make sure they are settling in
- Dealing with general tenancy issues
- Dealing with mutual exchanges
- Dealing with customer enquiries and complaints
- Offering advice and support to our more vulnerable tenants

Our housing officers and the areas they manage are:

Theresa Spelzini

North and Middle Deal
Upper Deal
Sholden
Walmer
Kingsdown
Ringwould
St Margaret's

Flora Evans

Dover Town
Eythorne and Elvington
Aylesham
Wingham
Preston
Staple
Stourmouth
Goodnestone
Shatterling
Ash

Denise Knight

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

Geoff Robinson

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

Our estate assistants are responsible for:

- Regularly visiting and checking our blocks of flats and estates
- Working closely with contractors to keep these clean and tidy
- Arranging for items left in communal areas to be removed



Anti-social behaviour

Our anti-social behaviour officers respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance. They work closely with other organisations like Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Kent County Council Social Services and our own local Community Safety team to try to resolve complaints from tenants about nuisance behaviour.

If you need to report anti-social behaviour, the quickest and easiest way of doing this is by visiting our website at www.dover.gov.uk/housing_for_tenants. Alternatively, you can call us on **01304 821199**.

If you reported anti-social behaviour to East Kent Housing before 30 September 2020, those details have been passed over to us at the council and we will continue to work on these cases.



Income and money advice

Our income and money advice team can help you with free and confidential advice to help you get back on track with your rent payments.

We can help with advice on benefits and maximising your income. We can also direct you to specialist agencies who may be able to offer further help.

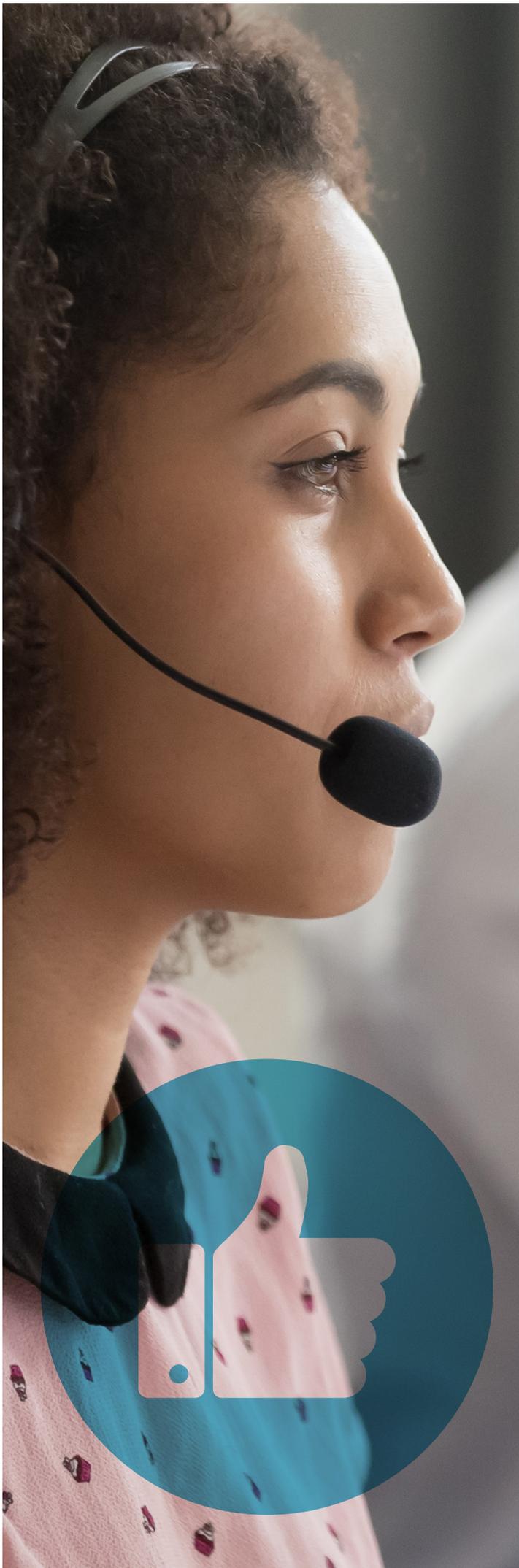
Contact us online at www.dover.gov.uk/housing_for_tenants or by telephone on 01304 821199.

Independent living

Independent living (sometimes called sheltered housing) is aimed at helping residents aged 55 and over to continue living as independently as possible while providing them with housing-related support. Our Independent Living Managers regularly visit our sheltered housing schemes and tenants to check all is well. Our team is made up of **Fiona Young, Kate Pawlica, Julie Peters** and **Kerstin Darkes**.

Our aim is to support residents without intruding and while maintaining both freedom and privacy. You can find out more about sheltered housing and how to apply for it on our website at www.dover.gov.uk/housing_for_tenants.





Dealing with complaints

You can make a complaint in the way that best suits you – online, in person, by phone or by letter.

A complaint is not a request for service or an enquiry about a service. In general, the following issues will be treated as part of the council's normal business rather than through the complaints process. Examples of this could include:

Examples of this could include:

- General enquiries
- Comments
- Initial requests for service

Stage One

The people who can best deal with any problems you have are those who directly provide the service. If you are not happy with the way you have been treated by the Council, you should contact the Department concerned.

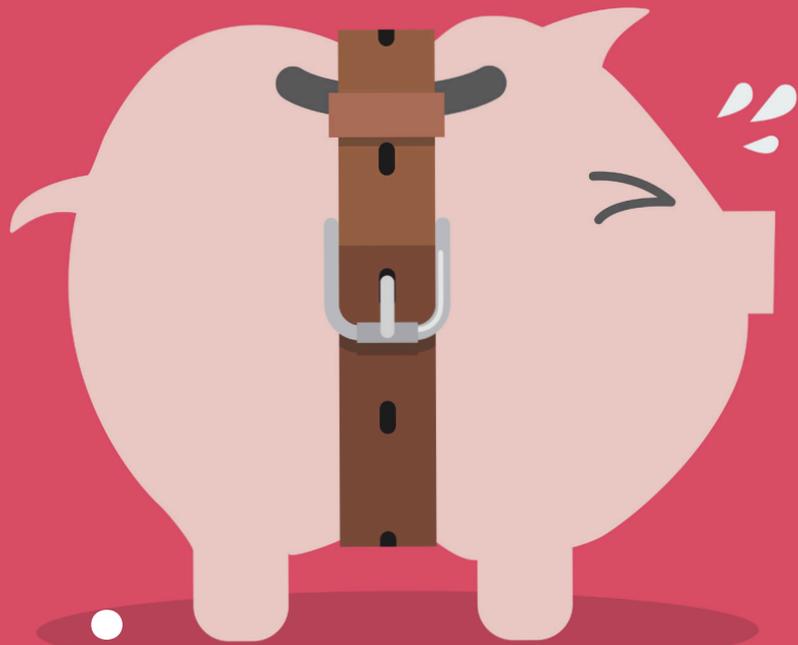
In many cases it will be possible to deal with your complaint straightaway and a telephone call to let you know we have resolved your problem may be enough. If not it may be appropriate to write and tell you what action we have taken or to explain the position. You are entitled to a reply within 10 working days. If the matter cannot be resolved in that time, you should get a letter explaining why not and giving you a new deadline.

Stage Two

If you are unhappy with the outcome of Stage 1, you can take the matter further and ask that the Council's Professional Standards Officer consider the matter who will aim to respond within 20 working days.

If you are still not satisfied with the reply you can then refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

When money is tight



One of our main priorities is to collect all rent and service charges due to be paid. It's important to collect as much as possible as the rent money we collect pays for the service we provide and repairs to be carried out. We can't offer services without the money to pay for them.

We know that most tenants don't want to be behind with their rent payments but we also recognise everyone's circumstances are different.

Some residents will lose their jobs and/or have less money and may be struggling to keep up with their rent payments.

We are sympathetic to tenants who fall behind with their rent and we will give all the help and advice we can.

The earlier we know about a problem, the quicker we can help. If you fall behind, we will contact you to find out if you're having money troubles.

If we can't get in touch with you by phone, text message, email or post, we may visit your home.

You may be eligible to claim benefits such as Universal Credit to help towards the cost of your rent. Visit [gov.uk/universal-credit](https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit) to find out if you could claim.

You might also be able to claim other benefits such as Council Tax Support. Visit our website at [dover.entitledto.co.uk/home/start](https://www.dover-entitledto.co.uk/home/start) to see if you could claim Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support.

Need independent housing advice or help with other bills?

You can get free, impartial advice from a number of organisations, including:

- The Citizens Advice Bureau: visit [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or call **0344 411 1444**
- Step Change debt charity: visit [stepchange.org](https://www.stepchange.org) or call **0800 138 1111**
- The National Debt Line: visit [nationaldebtline.org](https://www.nationaldebtline.org) or call **0808 808 4000**
- Kent Savers Credit Union: visit [kentsavers.co.uk](https://www.kentsavers.co.uk) or call **0333 321 9050**
- The Money Advice Service: visit [moneyadviceservice.org.uk](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk) or call **0300 500 5000**

Repairs and maintenance

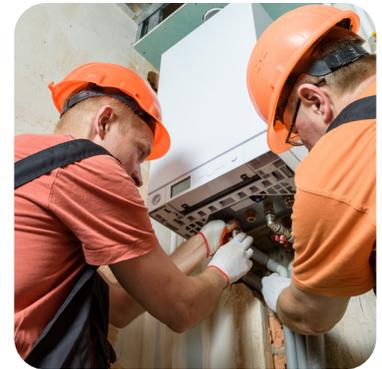
You've told us that how we deal with repairs and maintenance is your top priority for us to focus on.

Things the council is responsible for

- Boiler repairs and servicing
- Chimney and roof repairs (excluding sweeping)
- External wall repairs
- External door and window repairs
- Door entry system repairs and servicing
- Electric repairs - mechanical extractor fans, dangerous or exposed electrics, loss of lights or power (unless outside the Council's control)
- Floorboards
- Gutter repairs
- Immersion heaters
- Plumbing - burst pipes, no hot water, leaks within the home, water hammer, overflow running, toilet repairs/renewal, total loss of water (unless outside the Council's control)
- Plastering
- Lift repairs and servicing
- Banister rails
- Fascia boards
- Fire grates
- Glazing - if caused by vandalism and on receipt of incident number

Things you're responsible for

- Bulbs and fluorescent tubes
- Chimney sweeping
- Clothes lines
- Coal bunkers
- Door numbers, letter plates, knockers and bells
- Driveways and other paths
- Electric cookers and other appliances
- Floor tiles and coverings
- Fuses and plugs
- Gas cookers and connection pipes
- Insulation to cylinder and pipes
- Internal decorations
- Keys to house, garage, outhouse etc, whether lost or stolen
- Plugs, chains and cleaning of sanitaryware
- Removing air from radiators
- Tiles in bathroom, kitchen and fire surrounds
- Window hinges, catches etc, annual lubrication
- Washing machine and plumbing (including washing machine taps)
- Glazing - if you break it, you must repair it





Who deals with different types of repairs?

Our contractors deal with a wide range of household repairs, but there are some things that are your responsibility to fix. The list opposite shows the main types of repairs we look after, and those you're responsible for. You can find a full list of repairs you are responsible for on our website.



Other

Gas leaks - to be reported to the National Gas Emergencies number on 0800 111 999

Gas supply (total or partial loss) - call your gas supplier

Reporting repairs

Reporting repairs

Please remember that you are responsible for any repairs needed because of damage caused through neglect or misuse, even if the damage was accidental.

If you need to report a repair, use the contact details below. If you reported a repair to East Kent Housing before 30 September, these details have already been passed to the contractor who will ensure the issue is dealt with.

Household and communal repairs: email Mears at dover.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk or call **0800 023 4320**

Gas, hot water and central heating repairs: Email Gas Call Services at eastkent@gascall.co.uk or call **0800 012 9958**

Fire safety

If you live in a flat, you must not store any of your belongings in communal areas. These are a fire hazard and if you don't remove them when asked, the council can take action to dispose of them.

Gas safety

If you have a gas supply to your home, it's really important that your boiler is serviced every year.

We will contact you to let you know when your service is due - for your own safety and that of your neighbours, please do make sure you allow our contractors into your home to service your boiler and make sure it is safe.

Getting involved



I would like to find out more about getting involved in the housing service

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

What would you like to know more about?

Please tick all that apply

- Complaints, comments and compliments
- Surveys
- Estate inspector
- Estate inspections
- Focus groups
- Independent Living Forum
- Dover District Tenant Group

If you would be happy to receive future newsletters by email instead of by post, please tick this box:

Please tear out the form and send it to us at the Council Offices,
White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 3PJ

Getting involved

There are many ways you can get involved to help us to help you and we always promise to listen. You can:

- Give us feedback in a **complaint, comment or compliment**

- Take part in **surveys** we send to you

- Become an **estate inspector** to let us know about things like the standard of grass cutting and any items left in communal areas

- Join one of our **estate inspections** with your Housing Officer to help us make sure your area is being well maintained

- Take part in any **focus groups** we set up

- If you live in sheltered housing, take part in the **Independent Living Forum** or ask your scheme representative to raise any issues at the forum meetings

- Becoming a member of the **Dover District Tenant Group**. This group meets regularly every 6 to 8 weeks to discuss issues with housing. They have worked on many projects over the years to help improve our estates. Members also play a big role in our annual garden competition.



Want to know more?

Contact Beth Eddolls, our Tenant Involvement and Improvement Officer by email at tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk or by phone on **01304 821199**.

Alternatively, tear out the form opposite and send it to us at the Council Offices, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 3PJ and we will get in touch with you.

If you'd be happy to receive future tenant newsletters by email instead of getting a printed copy in the post, this would help save money we could then use to help improve the service we provide.

If you'd be happy with this, please indicate this on the slip, or email us at tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk.



Your cut out and keep guide to getting in touch

Contact your housing team

At the time of writing, we are running an appointment only face-to-face service from our **Whitfield offices at White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 3PJ** from 10am to 4pm (closed for lunch 12.30pm to 1.30pm).

The Gateway offices in Dover town centre are currently closed.

For the latest details, please see www.dover.gov.uk/Customer-Services/Home.aspx.

Online:

You can get in touch with us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at doverhousing@dover.gov.uk. Send us an email and one of the team will get back to you as soon as possible.

By telephone:

Call us on **01304 821199**. Lines are open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays). This line can also be used for out of hours emergencies.

