

neighbourhood news

The magazine for residents of
West Kent Housing Association

ISSUE 80: SUMMER 2018



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APPRENTICESHIP
FOR YOU?**

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WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

WELCOME FROM FRANK



WELCOME TO SUMMER. AS I WRITE THIS, THE SUN IS SHINING AND I AM STRUCK BY THE MANY OPPORTUNITIES THERE ARE IN THIS EDITION TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE AND EXCITING THIS SUMMER. THE PERFECT ANTIDOTE TO THE GLOOM OF ENGLAND'S INEVITABLE EARLY EXIT FROM THE WORLD CUP.

You could volunteer to help inspire children to read, as part of the Summer Reading Challenge. As well as encouraging children to explore the world of literature, you could re-acquaint yourself with the likes of Dennis and Gnasher. If you are a budding entrepreneur you could sign up for our next PopUp Business School. Who knows where the excitement,

inspiration, dedication and determination might take you?

Put in a bid to the Linda Hogan Community Fund - it could help you create a big community impact from a small amount of money. Take up an apprenticeship - Jessica would really recommend it - read her story inside. Or consider applying to be a resident

board member on the West Kent Board. Bring your unique understanding of what it's like to live in a West Kent home and use that to help us design services for the future.

Make the most of these opportunities and enjoy your summer.

Frank

RESIDENTS' ANNUAL REPORT

WE'VE PUT TOGETHER A HANDY SUMMARY OF OUR ANNUAL REPORT THAT IS AVAILABLE NOW ON OUR WEBSITE.

It contains details on where we spend our money, how we deal with complaints and some of the work we are doing in our communities. There is also information about numbers of repairs and where we have homes.

If you don't have access to the internet and would like us to send you a printed copy please call Customer Services on 01732 749400



Home Contents Insurance

Can you afford not to?

**WestKent**

Places to live. Space to grow.

For details visit: www.westkent.org
or call 01732 749400

HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

**PLEASE DON'T SCRIMP ON HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE,
YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO.**

We have no way of knowing when an accident will happen. We can all take precautions to ensure that the chances are low but all too often floods, fires, leaks and other household disasters cause thousands of pounds worth of damage to carpets, furniture and the fabric of our homes through no fault of either the resident or West Kent. Time and time again we deal with tenants who have cancelled their insurance, or not taken it out in the first place, only for them to realise the hard way, what a costly mistake they have made.

For less than the cost of a couple of coffees a week you can have peace of mind that if the unforeseen happens you will not have to fork out thousands to make your home liveable again.

Shop around, check the comparison sites and see what the experts are recommending. There are deals to bring the cost down but whatever you do, do it today.





FINANCIAL HELP FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS

IF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN A COMMUNITY ORGANISATION IN KENT YOU CAN APPLY TO WEST KENT FOR A GRANT OF UP TO £500.

Named in honour of one of our former colleagues, the Linda Hogan Community Fund supports small, local charities and community organisations that struggle to access other forms of funding, but create a big community impact from a small amount of money.

Last year, we awarded 56 different groups between £50 and £500. These projects delivered services and

activities to people of all ages and backgrounds and included a shopping service for people who are socially isolated, a counselling service for victims of crime, hanging basket plants for a gardening club, a coach trip to Eastbourne and a summer garden party for residents of a sheltered housing scheme. We also supported 26 Christmas parties for people including isolated older

residents, people with mental and physical disabilities and victims of domestic abuse.

One of the organisations who benefited from the fund is Companionship at Christmas. Their project, run solely by volunteers, was held in Sittingbourne on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Their fundraiser, Christine, told us about how their project makes a difference to

the individuals who attend. "It can be especially difficult at this time of year with the perception that everybody else is enjoying themselves and having a good time - our guests and volunteers are part of a worthwhile activity that gives them a feeling of both self-worth and being part of something. Many guests have been coming year on year and look forward to it - even booking for the following year." The fund paid for food, including a turkey, ham and a Christmas cake, and small gifts for the participants.

Another is 'Holiday at Home'. Each year, they host a two day event for older people living in and around the Swanley area, who may not have the opportunity to get away on holiday - this may be due to their financial situation, health or mobility



"Many guests have been coming year on year and look forward to it even booking for the following year"

"Our guests and volunteers are part of a worthwhile activity that gives them a feeling of both self-worth and being part of something"

problems, or simply having no one to go with. Last year the holiday destination was Blackpool, and the event came complete with indoor 'beach', illuminations, fish and chips, and even donkeys! One of the guests said it was "the highlight of their year" and that she was "bowled over by how helpful everyone was, and that nothing was too much trouble". The fund paid for an entertainer, a donation to the animal rescue centre (for bringing the donkeys), the fish and chips, Blackpool rock, and decorations for the hall.

If you, or someone you know, are involved with a voluntary organisation, community

group, or local charity who operate in Kent, perhaps the Linda Hogan Community Fund could help you make a difference in your community. To request an application form, or find out more about how to apply, please email Elaine Granger elaine.granger@wkha.org.uk or telephone 01732 749420.



IS AN APPRENTICESHIP FOR YOU?

Working in housing isn't always at the top of everyone's career wish-list but Jessica Starr, our Housing apprentice, thinks it should be.

Jessica explains, "When I was at school, apprenticeships weren't really talked about, I felt that they were a bit of a taboo subject. This is my second career, I have already worked as a labourer and combined that with studying for a public services BTEC at college but although I want to work in a career that is about caring, it wasn't for me.

I, and a lot of the people I know, thought that apprenticeships were for young people. I thought you had to be 19 and under, but they are actually for people of any age. I'm 21 but if I was 61 I could still apply. I found this opportunity advertised on the .gov website, that's a good place to start because you can search by area so I looked for jobs close to where I live.

The thing about an apprenticeship is that it gives me the skills to have a proper career in something rewarding. As well as learning on the job I also study for a few hours each week and at the end of the year I will have a qualification, an NVQ level 2 in Business Administration. It's all online but I have a tutor who comes in to work every few weeks to support me so I



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never feel overwhelmed with all that I have to learn.”

Jessica started as a level 2 apprentice in January 2018. She will spend three months in a number of different areas of the business, learning how each of them works and gaining new skills.

“I started working with the Emerald team, they work with older people living in West Kent homes. I loved that and thought it would be my favourite team to work in but then I was sent to work in tenancy support and found I loved that too!”

“I KNOW THAT I WILL HAVE A CAREER IN THE AREA OF WORK THAT I ENJOY AND I WILL FOCUS ON THAT AS MY LONG TERM GOAL”

Jessica will also spend time in the allocations and income teams, after which, she hopes she will be able to move to a level 3 apprenticeship.

She concludes, “I would really recommend an apprenticeship, I would say to those that are interested to not focus on the wage - you don’t earn much - but instead think of the opportunity. I know that I will have a career in the area of work that I enjoy and I will focus on that as my long term goal. I think it demonstrates my commitment to future employers and shows that I am investing in me. I’m grateful to West Kent for this opportunity.”

For details of other apprentice opportunities at West Kent please visit the website at www.westkent.org.uk.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED TO HELP INSPIRE CHILDREN TO READ, AS PREPARATIONS GET UNDER WAY FOR THIS YEAR’S SUMMER READING CHALLENGE.

This year’s county-wide event will again encourage children to spend their holidays exploring the world of literature, with 2018’s Mischief Makers theme featuring Dennis, JJ, Pieface and Gnasher.

Caroline Williams, the Volunteer Development Coordinator organising the Kent County Council scheme, said volunteers were needed to help support the event in ways such as leading craft activities and setting up book displays.

“It’s a very flexible arrangement and we are happy for people to give as

much or as little time as they can manage,” she added. “Volunteers are generally between 12 and 25 but all ages are welcome and are given plenty of support.

“Volunteering helps people build new skills, add something extra to their CV, meet new people, support their community and have fun while helping others enjoy reading.”

Would-be Summer Reading Challenge helpers can sign up by talking to a member of staff in their local library, emailing libraryvolunteers@kent.gov.uk or visiting kent.gov.uk/volunteering

“We will put anyone interested in touch with their closest library and they will be invited in for a chat,” said Caroline. “The challenge runs in every library throughout the summer holidays, so there is lots of scope for getting involved.”





EXTRA CARE HOUSING

IF YOU'VE EVER WONDERED WHAT MAKES EXTRA CARE HOUSING AN IDEAL HOME FOR OLDER PEOPLE THERE IS A GREAT VIDEO ON YOUTUBE THAT EXPLAINS ALL ABOUT THE BENEFITS FROM THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE.

West Kent is pleased to support the production of a series of videos that focus on Extra Care homes. With voices of residents of over 20 Extra Care schemes across the country, the Housing LIN's first video entitled 'What is Extra Care Housing?' is the first in the series.

Combining the views of those who need Extra Care housing, with industry

professionals and care assistants, the video shows the consistent opinions that emphasise the need for these types of homes, summed up brilliantly by one local councillor as 'comfort, security and happiness'.

Visit www.youtube.com, search 'What is Extra Care Housing' and click on the video from HousingLIN.



CCTV CATCHES RESIDENT DOING SOMETHING RIGHT

WHILE CCTV CAMERAS ARE NORMALLY USED TO PREVENT OR SPOT CRIME OR ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, THEY CAN ALSO HIGHLIGHT GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS.

We recently spotted one of our tenants, Richard Green, tidying up the bin store at the top of Hollytree Avenue, Swanley - and were so impressed that we called in to say 'thanks'.

"I spotted Richard a few times clearing up other people's rubbish in the bin store, putting bags in the bins and sweeping up," said our Community Safety Officer Mandie Stallard.

"He made a real difference to the neighbourhood and was clearly taking a pride in his local area on a purely voluntary basis, so I went to see him and took him a thank you card. Richard is a great example of someone who has taken our 'Love where you live' message to heart."

Richard told us he had got into the habit of checking the state of the bins once or twice a week because he hated to see the area looking a mess.

"As people turn into Hollytree Avenue it's the first thing they see, and if it's been left in a state it's really not a pleasant sight," he said. "I like to see the place looking tidy and it doesn't take much just to clear up anything that has spilled and give it a quick sweep.

"If the bin store is left in a mess, foxes, cats and the wind quickly make it worse, so I was just trying to do my bit. I didn't expect to get noticed and it was a pleasant surprise when Mandie dropped in to say thank you."



PROPERTY MOTS

We have reached the end of the twelve-month pilot of Property MOTs. We will not be carrying out any more while we review their impact and decide whether we will continue with them.

This shouldn't impact you at all. You should continue to report any repairs needed in the usual ways either through the website at www.westkent.org.uk or by calling customer services.

THINKING OF BUYING A SCOOTER?

If you have mobility problems and are considering buying a scooter, please be aware that you need to get our permission beforehand because there can be issues with storage and charging. Please call or email customerservices@wkha.org.uk before you buy one.





GOOD QUALITY FURNITURE - ABACUS OPENS IN SHEPWAY, MAIDSTONE AND WALDESLADE

OUR NEW ABACUS FURNITURE STORE HAS PROVED A GREAT HIT WITH THE PEOPLE OF SHEPWAY, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MAIDSTONE - AND THERE'S ANOTHER ONE ON THE WAY.

While the new store in Northumberland Road is already helping families fit out their homes for less - while keeping furniture and other household items out of landfill - we are busy planning our next Abacus outlet.

3-4 Thetford House, Walderslade Road, Chatham, ME5 9LR in Walderslade will be the venue for the next store, which will serve our tenants and others living in that part of Medway.

Meanwhile the Shepway store, set up in partnership with Golding Homes, has been doing a roaring trade in pre-owned furniture, homeware and clothes at low prices, along with new but low-cost items such as bedding, towels and curtains.

“Our aim is to help people set up a nice home without landing themselves in

debt,” explained retail supervisor Kim Palmer. “We keep our prices down to help people stay within their means.”

Caroline McBride, Golding Homes’ Head of Community Development, said: “We are delighted to support the Abacus store as it provides a much needed service for those living in our local communities. It also offers some great volunteering opportunities to help individuals gain the skills they need for employment.”



"We come in for a chat as well as to see what we can find, and we often bring things to donate as well, if we have had a bit of a clear out."

Northumberland Road premises with partner Nigel Packham.

"We come in for a chat as well as to see what we can find, and we often bring things to donate as well, if we have had a bit of a clear out."

West Kent Enterprise Manager Paula Meurs said the 'drop in' element of the store was part of the social enterprise's role in Shepway.

"As well as being a social landlord, West Kent has a strong focus on community, and Abacus is one way in which we try to support our local neighbourhoods," she said.

"As well as extending the life of furniture, clothes and other items that would otherwise be thrown away, and allowing people on a low income to furnish their homes at much less than high street prices, Abacus provides something of a community hub."

Sallyann Povey, Crisis Prevention Manager, said the third Abacus furniture store in Walderslade was expected to open after changes to the building had been agreed with the landlord.

Meanwhile our original Abacus store, in Greatness Lane, Sevenoaks, continues to flourish. All the stores are open to everyone and offer a delivery service.

"We are delighted to support the Abacus store as it provides a much needed service for those living in our local communities."

The smart, new double-fronted store was particularly welcomed by customers who used to shop in our Parkwood premises before it was forced to close as part of the redevelopment of the area.

Although it was replaced by a temporary shop in Senacre Square, that too closed in April 2017 and was soon missed by loyal customers like Julie Jones.

"We have been really looking forward to the new store opening," said Julie, on a visit to the airy and spacious

YOU CAN COUNT ON ABACUS

The Abacus Furniture Project has not only helped local people set up home for less but has also made a big difference to the planet.

The 125 tonnes of furniture that has been kept out of landfill is equivalent to:



32 ELEPHANTS



15 DOUBLE DECKER BUSES

14,000 BLACK SACKS OF RUBBISH



or the annual non-recycled waste produced by 227 households.

The bike recycling scheme run in partnership with Rochester Prison also saved 491 cycles from being landfilled and gave them an extended life with a new owner.

The project helped 3,776 households buy low cost furniture in 2017 - thanks to donations by 1,149 customers.

A HAPPY HOME

WE HAVE DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF HOMES AT DOWNS VIEW, SWANLEY WITH MORE DUE LATER THIS YEAR, THEY ARE AVAILABLE FOR SHARED OWNERSHIP.

One of our new home owners at Downs View, is Stuart (pictured), a father of one who was living in Swanley with family and works for the London Fire Brigade.

Stuart was able to get onto the property ladder using our shared ownership scheme and purchased a 50% share of a two- bedroom home.

We have homes available across Kent and you can buy anything

from a 35% share. Details are available on our website at www.westkent.org.



It's good to share . . .

Are you looking to own your own place? Take a first step on the ladder with a West Kent shared ownership home.

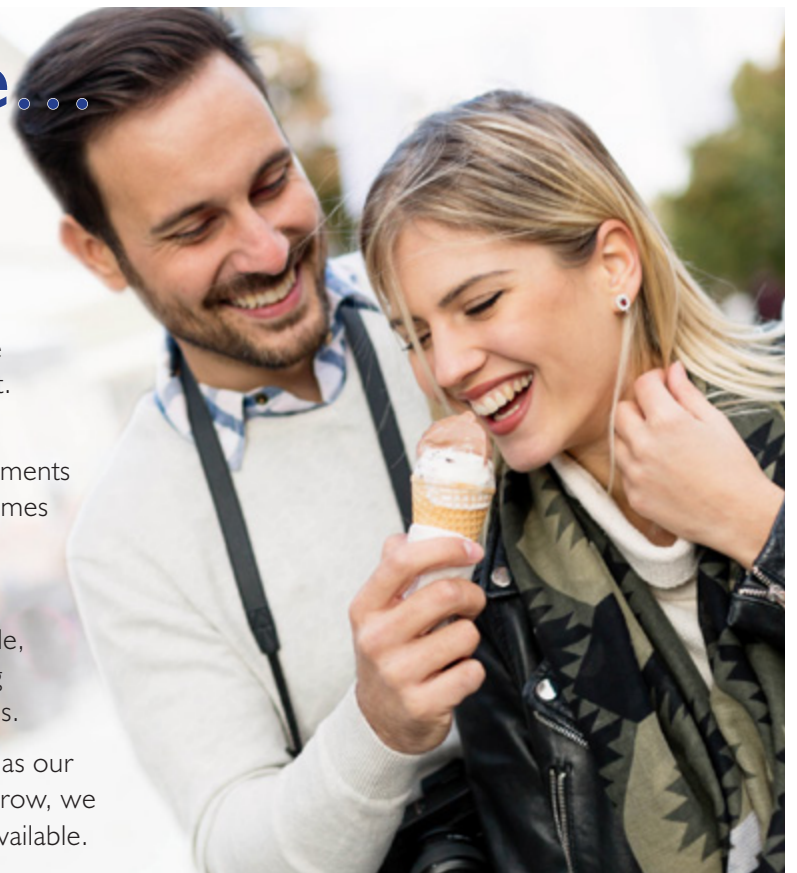
West Kent is an affordable housing provider with homes throughout Kent and Medway. Our shared ownership homes allow you to take out a mortgage on part of your home and pay rent towards the rest. As your income grows, you can buy a bigger share.

We will shortly be offering 'shared ownership' apartments in Canterbury city centre – and we have other schemes across the county. Get in touch to find out more at

westkent.org

As well as housing families, couples and single people, West Kent manages a number of supported housing schemes for older people and those with care needs.

We own and manage more than 7,000 homes, but as our reputation for providing great homes continues to grow, we need more sites – so let us know if you have land available.



Housing families – supporting communities

Call: 01732 749900 sales@wkha.org.uk westkent.org

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Fire Safety

The first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire is on 15th June and the work to ensure that a tragedy on this scale is never allowed to happen again continues.

Our thoughts remain with those affected. We don't have any buildings that are the scale of Grenfell and the small number of high rise blocks that we own are not clad in the same material.

Our efforts continue, however, to ensure that the safety of our residents is always a priority. We carry out regular fire safety checks -every year in our high rise buildings, and any works we

undertake, to any of our properties are always done to the highest standard. Our team of very skilled surveyors ensure that any works we undertake are done to a high specification.

If you live in one of our properties with a communal hallway and want to see the latest fire safety check for your building we will happily make it available, simply contact the customer services team.

ENJOY THE SUMMER - BUT PLEASE BE CONSIDERATE

The sun's out, the evenings are warmer and for many of us there's nothing nicer than sitting in the garden with family and friends until the sun goes down.

But for some of us that isn't as nice as it sounds because they live next door to inconsiderate neighbours. Please don't be that neighbour.

- If you are having a BBQ or friends around speak to your neighbours beforehand and agree a time that you will finish. Keep your music to a tolerable level and ensure that your guests do not get rowdy.
- Smoking cannabis is illegal, it is also anti-social. The pungent smell can be overpowering and people do not want the stench creeping over into their garden. We receive a lot of complaints about cannabis smoking and we always contact the police.

GAS CHECKS - DON'T PUT THEM OFF



A capped gas meter

We know it's tempting to delay your annual gas check, you can probably think of at least a hundred better ways to spend that time, but please don't.

West Kent has to check your gas every year, it's the law. If we don't do it in time then we cut off your gas supply and you will be without it until we can reschedule your appointment. You won't be a priority if you cancelled and so it could be some time before we reconnect you.

The law is there to protect you, faulty gas appliances can cause carbon monoxide poisoning, explosions and death. Don't risk it.

If you receive a letter from us for your annual gas check, make arrangements to be there for it.





WE ARE PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN A NEW SITTINGBOURNE COMMUNITY HUB THAT WILL OFFER ADVICE, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, SOMEWHERE TO MEET AND PERHAPS EVEN THE PATHWAY TO A CAREER.

The refurbished hub in Cavell Way has been provided by Moat and funded by the Moat Foundation but will be managed by West Kent alongside two other Moat community hubs, one at The Vineries in Gillingham and the other in Warrior Avenue, Gravesend

The building will, in time, be open five days a week, supported by volunteers, offering a wide range of services that reflect what local people needed.

Existing and potential new users of the hub joined Moat Foundation's Anne-Britt Karunaratne (known as ABK) at the opening of the comfortable and airy new community base.

She said it would provide information, advice and guidance on everything from debt management to health issues,

as well as supporting job seekers and potential entrepreneurs and offering a social space for both children and older people.

The hub will work with a number of partners, many of them at the launch. They included Pat Shelley, Chief Executive of the London Youth Support Trust, which helps 18 to 30 year-olds set up in business and is keen to provide that kind of support in Kent.

Facilities include an IT suite/training room, a one-to-one counselling room and a children's chill out area as well as a fully-fitted kitchen and a comfortable meeting space on the ground floor.

West Kent Communities Director Will Campbell-Wroe said the hub would support West Kent's overall aim of

making sure as many people as possible had "somewhere to live, someone to love and something constructive to do".

He commented: "West Kent is about far more than just homes. We are keen to build communities and we are delighted to be working with Moat to make sure their hubs fulfil that role. This building will provide a focal point for the neighbourhood and one of the team's first jobs will be to talk to local people about what they want it to deliver for their community."

POP UP BUSINESS SCHOOLS

EXCITEMENT, ENERGY AND INSPIRATION BECAME HARD WORK, DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION AS ANOTHER BATCH OF WOULD-BE ENTREPRENEURS BENEFITED FROM OUR LATEST POPUP BUSINESS SCHOOL.

The nine-day event at Tovil Community Centre was designed to encourage and inspire people to set up their own businesses 'doing something they love' - and it had exactly that effect.

"It was absolutely brilliant. Everyone went away from the course really motivated and determined to turn their idea into a business," commented West Kent's Integration Manager Keeley Atkinson. "They set up a Facebook group to keep in contact and to support each other and they have already been posting success stories."

PopUp Business School founder and lead trainer Alan Donegan was the man providing advice and inspiration in equal measure and making it clear that 'doing something you love' was a great starting point for a new business.

"Too many people believe they need money and a business plan before they can even think about setting up on their own, and that simply isn't true. All they really need is an idea and the drive to put it into practice," he said.

As Keeley summed up: "PopUp Business School gets results by cultivating people's ideas instead of crushing those ideas by talking about bank loans and business plans. It inspires people to follow their dreams rather than worrying about red tape."

The sessions are pitched at people who tend to find it tricky for one reason or another to slot into a 'normal' full time job but who still want to earn money.

Danni Kempson found the course an inspiration, with the revitalised website she set up for her business, Kempson Collectables, selling tickets for her next Pokémon trading card event on the evening it was launched.

"I saw the course advertised and I thought it might help me take the business forward as I had no business background," said Danni. "The course has covered all sorts of areas including legal



issues, tax and VAT but always in a simple, fun and understandable way."

The next event is being planned for the Parkwood area of Maidstone and will run from 2 to 13 July.

"We are hoping to run it from an empty shop close to the town centre," said Keeley. Please keep an eye on the PopUp Business School website at www.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/ for details.

Keeley can be contacted at keeley.atkinson@wkha.org.uk



ENSURING TENANTS KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEAD

WEST KENT WANTS TENANTS TO SUSTAIN THEIR TENANCY. BY THIS, WE MEAN THAT WE WANT TENANTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM TO MAINTAIN THEIR HOME AND PAY THEIR RENT AND BILLS ON TIME. WE WILL HELP BY MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO ACCESS SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND TO BE GIVEN TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT WHEN THEY NEED IT.

Research shows that the reasons that tenancies are not successful are mostly avoidable with the right support in place. Tenancies fail as a result of evictions for rent arrears, fuel poverty - where people in financial hardship are unable to adequately heat their home, hoarding, inadequate maintenance of a property or neglecting repair responsibilities. External factors such as changes to benefits and accessing health services can also impact.

West Kent's Tenancy Sustainment strategy is responding to these challenges and how they are being addressed to provide both short and long-term solutions to ensure that tenants can lead fulfilling lives in our homes.



Our advice for maintaining a successful tenancy is:

- Manage your money - pay your rent on time, don't fall into arrears or if you do, talk to us early on, don't let your debts build. We can offer help to get a job or a better job by offering free training and support. There's a budgeting tool on our website where you can create your own personal budget plan.
- Keep your home well maintained, there are videos on our website that show how to do some simple repairs yourself. Report repairs that are our responsibility promptly.
- Consider your neighbours, don't be a nuisance, keep noise to a minimum, keep your home and garden tidy and look out for those that need a bit of support.
- If your home is too big for you talk to us about getting financial help to downsize.
- Check with us before you carry out any adaptations to your home, you'll need permission for most and some may require you to put things back to how they were when you leave.

BOOK YOUR REPAIR ONLINE 24/7

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN REPORT A REPAIR AND BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT SLOT ONLINE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE WESTKENT.ORG?

Tenants registered with My West Kent, our online customer portal, can beat the phone queues to report repairs online any time at a time that suits them, not just when our offices are open.

We have been making some changes to our existing service to make it even better. Shortly, tenants will be able to report a greater range of repairs, including plumbing, heating and electrical repairs and rebook or cancel existing repair appointments. We are also making it easier to understand and use, with a simple menu that helps guide you to the right repair, so you don't report the wrong thing and waste your appointment.

If your repair is an emergency you should still call us on 0800 169 1122, but for everything else go to My West Kent and report it hassle-free.

Registering with My West Kent is easy, you just need your tenancy reference number, surname and date of birth. As well as reporting your repairs, you can view your rent statement, view your tenancy details, update changes in your household and log a complaint or compliment. Visit westkent.org today to sign-up.



DOG BREEDING IN WEST KENT HOMES

Pet owners in a number of neighbourhoods have been given advice, support and free goodies as part of our ongoing campaign to promote responsible dog ownership.

Our Love Your Dog roadshow has already visited Swanley, Edenbridge, Hillingdon Rise, Sevenoaks and Hartley, dispensing poo bags and offering free micro-chipping as well as checking that stored details are up-to-date.

Now we are focusing on another issue that is about to be highlighted by new legislation by reminding tenants that they are not allowed to breed dogs in any of our properties.

Using our homes for breeding dogs is already against the tenancy rules, and the new Animal Licensing Act being introduced in October is expected to tighten up on the regulations and may also outlaw some practices around so-called puppy farming.

“Not only is it against our tenancy rules, but it can have an impact on benefits and could soon also see tenants breaking the rules, depending on exactly what the legislation contains in October,” said West Kent’s Community Safety Officer Mandie Stallard. “We will serve notice on anyone who breaches their tenancy in this way.”



CHANGES TO YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

THERE HAS BEEN A LOT IN THE NEWS RECENTLY ABOUT HOW COMPANIES USE THE INFORMATION THEY HAVE ABOUT YOU BUT YOU MAY NOT KNOW THAT ON 25 MAY, NEW DATA PROTECTION LAWS CAME INTO FORCE IN THE UK AND THROUGHOUT EUROPE.

Data is anything about you including your address, contact details but also your shopping habits, hobbies and family information.

You won't see a massive change in the way that we communicate or interact with you, as most of the new rules are similar to old data protection laws. However, you will have more control over your data and how it is used. You will be the owner of information that relates to you.

We will have a greater responsibility to make sure that your data is used correctly and your privacy is protected. All businesses that deal with your data will have to comply with the new rules.

You have the following eight rights under new data protection rules:

1 The right to be informed

You have the right to be told what information is collected about you, who it is shared with, what it is used for and how long it is kept for. We use our privacy notices to tell you this information, these are on our website.

2 The right of access

You can ask for a copy of the personal information we hold about you. This is so you can verify whether we are processing your data lawfully. When you request this information, it is called a subject access

request and we will usually supply the information within one month.

You can log in to see some of your personal data using our My West Kent portal.

3 The right to rectification

If we have personal data about you that is inaccurate, you can ask for it to be corrected. We will normally investigate and correct any mistakes within one month.

4 The right to erasure

This is also known as the right to be forgotten. You can ask us to delete information about you. We will normally investigate and respond within one month. We will only delete data we no longer need, or we are not allowed to use under the new data protection laws.

5 The right to restrict processing

You can ask us to limit or stop processing your personal data under certain circumstances, for example if you feel we should not be using it under data protection law or you feel that it is not accurate. We will stop using your personal data while we investigate your query, and give a response within one month.

6 The right to data portability

You can ask us to provide your personal data in a format which means it can be reused by another organisation or service. We will normally respond to a request for data portability within one month.

7 The right to object

You can object to us processing your personal data in certain circumstances, for example if we are directly marketing to you, or if you feel that we are using it in an unlawful way. We will stop using your personal data unless we can show that we have legal basis to use it.

8 Rights in relation to automated decision-making

You have certain rights where decisions are made about you by machines or computers with no human involvement. We do not use automated decision-making for any of the services we provide to you.

If you would like to make use of any of your rights under data protection law, please contact us on dataprotection@wkha.org.uk or call our customer services team on 01732 479400.

For more information about your rights, and obligations for businesses under new data protection laws, visit the Information Commissioner's Office website (www.ico.org.uk). The Information Commissioner's Office is the regulator for data protection in the UK.



RESIDENT BOARD MEMBERS

WE ARE RECRUITING FOR A RESIDENT BOARD MEMBER OF THE WEST KENT BOARD.

The board is responsible for the strategic direction of West Kent and meets regularly to examine, challenge and support the work of the directors.

As a tenant board member you will bring your unique understanding of what it's like to live in a West Kent home and use that to help us design services for the future. You'll be one of three residents on the West Kent Board and will be fully supported as a board member. Board members are expected to attend eight to ten meetings a year, all held in the afternoon. This position is paid and the annual salary is £6,242.

This opportunity is open to anyone aged over 18 living in a West Kent home. There is more information about being a tenant board member on our website www.westkent.org. We will also be holding an open morning for anyone interested in the role on 10 July.

If you would like to find out more please contact Corinne Beech, our Resident Involvement Officer at corinne.beech@wkha.org.uk or call 01732 749420.



CONSULTATIONS

West Kent is committed to getting resident feedback on all our policies and strategies and we do this through face to face meetings, email, online surveys and through formal resident auditors. If you would like to get involved and can spare anything from 30 minutes a month (for online surveys from home) to a couple of days a month, working with us to improve an area of our service, we'd love to hear from you.

There is more information on the West Kent website or please get in touch with Corinne Beech, our Resident Involvement Officer email corinne.beech@wkha.org.uk or call on 01732 749420.



WEB CHAT

SINCE MAY, CUSTOMERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AVOID THE TELEPHONE QUEUES AND CHAT TO US ONLINE.

The new web chat option we've added to our website provides an extra way for you to talk to us. The service means you can avoid the telephone queues and get answers more quickly than current digital options such as email or online contact forms.

We're aware that customers are increasingly expecting more digital options for interacting with us and our Strategic Plan commits us to achieving 50% of resident contact via online services by 2020.

Jo Fox, Head of Customer Experience says, "Customers have been able to

contact us through our website and social media channels, Facebook and Twitter, for some time now. When developing our Digital Plan, we identified web chat as an opportunity to enhance our range of digital contact channels and give our customers more choice in how they interact with us."

The web chat service, which lets you to talk to a member of our customer service team, will run during normal office hours

for a pilot period of six months. We hope that offering a broader range of online contact options will allow us to deliver a faster and more responsive service, making digital a more attractive option than picking up the telephone.

So next time you need to contact us, skip the phone queue and chat to us on westkent.org instead!



GETTING IN TOUCH

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Contact our customer service advisors to pay your rent, report a repair, get advice about finding a home or for any other housing related question.

- 01732 749400
- enquiries@wkha.org.uk
- www.facebook.com/WestKentHA
- www.twitter.com/West_Kent

REPORT A REPAIR

01732 749400
0800 169 1122
between 8am and 5pm.
In emergencies at other times

- 0800 169 1122
- repairs@wkha.org.uk
- www.westkent.org

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR DEBTS OR STRUGGLING TO PAY YOUR RENT?

Contact us as soon as possible for help and advice

- 01732 749400
- www.westkent.org/payrent

WESTKENT.ORG
CONTACT US ON OUR WEBSITE

