

# NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

The magazine for residents of  
West Kent Housing Association

Spring  
**2020**

## CookHOUSE Youth Project

HOUSE, West Kent's award-winning youth group in Edenbridge for 11-19 year olds, has launched a new life skills course, 'CookHOUSE', page 17

## One Big Family – Helping the Homeless

Last year, we supported West Kent Mind, raising £8,258.14 for the charity.

page 18

## What is shared ownership?

Have you ever wondered what shared ownership actually means? If so, you're not alone!

page 10

 @West\_Kent  West Kent [westkent.org](https://www.westkent.org)

**WestKent**

Places to live. Space to grow.

# WELCOME TO OUR SPRING NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

Since we started putting this edition together, we entered the most extraordinary of times. Covid-19 has changed the world, living through the lockdown has forced us to live our lives differently, probably forever. The situation, however, has shone a light on all of those in our society that are prepared to go the extra mile to help friends and neighbours.

We know we have many residents that work in the NHS, in supermarkets, in the blue light services, food distribution, schools and other key frontline services and we want to say thank you for continuing to do what you do for us all.

At West Kent, we have been concentrating on providing our essential services these past few weeks. We've been carrying out emergency repairs, making sure our older residents are safe and well and undertaking essential safety checks – particularly the annual gas check. Thank you all for your patience and understanding.

We've also adapted some of our services and are delivering them digitally. Our youth teams are providing sessions on Zoom, keeping young people engaged with quizzes, competitions and activities. They are also offering a very useful 'ear' for parents or children that need someone to talk to if they or their child are struggling with the changes.



We have continued to communicate with you, by phone, email, skype and we have been delighted to see many more of you engaging with us through our social media channels and website. This communication has kept us going and we have really enjoyed getting to know some of you better.

This Neighbourhood News was mostly written before the Covid-19 situation developed, but we didn't want to miss an opportunity for you to share with us some of the great things we have all achieved.

Keep safe

*The editorial team*

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- What we're doing to prevent the spread of Coronavirus in our communities
- Welcome to Stonewater residents
- Turning work experience into a career





# Welcome to Stonewater tenants

West Kent has recently taken on just over 100 homes thanks to a stock transfer from Stonewater Housing Association.

Tracy Allison, Chief Executive says:

*"We would like to extend a warm welcome to all these new tenants and we hope the transfer has been a smooth process for you. We are keen that our residents shape and influence our services so please look at this edition's article 'spotlight on resident engagement'".*

All former Stonewater tenants should have already received an introductory pack all about the transfer, and check in calls from West Kent's Tenancy Services Officers will happen over the coming weeks if they haven't already. If you need to get in touch with West Kent with any questions or queries, your first point of contact is the customer services team.

Please visit our website to find out more about West Kent: [www.westkent.org](http://www.westkent.org)



## Have you heard about West Kent Works?

38 people have benefitted from the West Kent Works weekly pop up job hub in Swanley since January.

Our two-person training and employment team has partnered with Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) to provide the best support and advice to people looking to increase their hours, change jobs, find training or get into paid employment. They work closely with each person on an individual basis to identify what they want and how they can achieve their goals. Anyone is welcome to attend as many sessions as they need to give them the best chance.

As a result of the success in Swanley, the team has set up a weekly event in Sevenoaks. You'll find them on Wednesday mornings at House in the Basement, located in the Stag Theatre, from 9.30-11.30am just as soon as the current restrictions are lifted.

If you're not sure where to start, give Dawn and Pauline a call on 01732 749420 or email them at [westkentworks@wkha.org.uk](mailto:westkentworks@wkha.org.uk).



Our Sevenoaks and Swanley job clubs have been Postponed for now due to the coronavirus outbreak, but we're still providing advice and support by phone and email.

We know lots of people are worried about employment at the moment. We've listed a range of jobs on our website: [westkent.org/westkentworks](http://westkent.org/westkentworks)

# Home contents insurance can you afford not to?

Don't scrimp on home contents insurance. West Kent will not normally replace your possessions if you have a fire, flood, smashed window or other disaster at home.

**Whatever you do, do it today.**

**Top home insurance tips:**

- Shop around, check the comparison sites and see what the experts are recommending.
- There are deals for social housing tenants and different providers to help bring the cost down.
- Make sure any cover includes glazing and internal doors – these are your responsibility to replace if they get damaged.



**If you're suffering from abuse, or living in a household where any type of abuse is taking place, please make contact with us.**

We may be in lock-down, but there is always help available. Whatever the problem, we will offer help and support and can signpost you to professionals.

Email: [mytenancy@wkha.org.uk](mailto:mytenancy@wkha.org.uk)  
or call 01732 749 400 to speak to your Tenancy Services Officer

You can also call one of the following helplines:

**Victim Support: 0808 168 9276**

**National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247**

**ChildLine: 0800 1111**



# How we're performing

We want you to know how well we are performing. We also want to learn from our mistakes and ensure we continue to improve our services.

Here is our performance against our service standards for the second half of 2019. We will publish another update in summer 2020.



Customer contact with the right person, right answer, first time



Repairs that were completed on time



Repairs that met our 'maintaining your home' promise



20

Number of complaint reviews and appeals



Percentage of complaints upheld



139

New homes built

05

West Kent Neighbourhood News  
Spring 2020

## What our complaints are about

We received 333 'making-it-right' (the first stage of our complaints process) complaints in the second half of 2019.

### These complaints were mainly about:

- Disputing recharges or missed appointment charges
  - Compensation for damaged items
  - The quality of repairs
  - The length of time for repairs
  - Component replacements (such as kitchen, bathroom, fencing, window and door replacements)
  - Cleaning and grounds maintenance
- 20 issues were escalated to complaint reviews or appeals. This is down by four compared to the previous six months.
- 40% of complaints were upheld. This is 5% higher compared to the previous six months. This is one more upheld complaint than before.

### Right person, right answer, first time

We were able to resolve enquiries within the first contact in 86% of cases.

We have recently changed the way we calculate this figure to make it more accurate.



Residents at the grand opening event of Kingswood Court's refurbishment



## Residents celebrate new lounge and upgraded facilities

Residents at Kingswood Court in West Kingsdown celebrated the completed refurbishment of their scheme with afternoon tea and musical entertainment in their new lounge.

Kingswood Court, our over 55s scheme in West Kingsdown has recently undergone a major refurbishment. A computer room and wellness room have been created, the guest room and communal bathroom have been updated and there has been extensive decoration throughout, including new carpets, blinds and furniture.

Our staff worked with residents to decide on the colour scheme, putting the final decision to a vote, with vibrant raspberry and lime winning by a landslide. The team worked with residents and staff to keep disruption to a minimum and made sure the communal areas could still be used during the works. The old furniture still had plenty of life

in it, and it was donated to a local school.

Joanne, Hiscock, Head of the Asset team says: *"We work with the supported housing team and identify sheltered schemes needing refurbishment. The decoration at Kingswood Court was looking tired and some structural work needed to be done. It has been an intense few weeks, but it looks fantastic, and it has made a huge difference."*

Contractors Brenwards, who completed the structural work, and Ian Williams Decorators were invited to the celebration.

## Queens Court refurbishment

Our asset team has also been working on refurbishment work at Queens Court, Edenbridge with the upgraded kitchen and laundry room finished just in time for the Christmas party.





# Men's sheds

A successful woodwork project at Abacus Sevenoaks has become so popular, it is now open for a third day during the week.

In 2016, West Kent partnered with Men's Sheds, Kent division, to run the woodwork project at our Abacus warehouse in Sevenoaks. But despite its name, you don't have to be a man to attend.

The Men's Sheds Association was originally set up as a meeting place for retired men. Research found that men's social and support networks usually revolve around work and when they retire this network can change or vanish completely, leading to social isolation and loneliness. The Sheds are set up across the country for a variety of activities including model making, gardening, carpentry, bike refurbishment and woodwork.



07

## Are you a South East Water customer?

South East Water is encouraging customers to sign up to a scheme to support vulnerable customers.


Those with a disability, illness, mental health issue, or other vulnerability, can join the Priority Service Register, meaning they can get access to extra support with payments, and will be given a priority service if their water supply is interrupted.

South East water is encouraging customers to sign up to the register before reaching a crisis point so that in the event of a water emergency, vulnerable customers will quickly get support.

**You can find out more by contacting the South East Water Customer Care team on 0333 000 0001.**

If you aren't a South East Water customer, contact your water supplier to ask about the register. Other utility companies run similar schemes so if you have a vulnerability, contact them to find out what priority services they offer.



A hand holding a glowing lightbulb over stacks of coins. The background is blurred, showing a desk with a calculator and a notebook.

"There are a few things your family can do to help reduce costs."

# How much?!

The heating is on all day, you've lost track of how much washing up you've done, and you can't wrestle the PlayStation controller out of your teenager's hands. With schools and businesses being closed, our homes are fuller, busier and a black hole for energy, and consequently money.

There are a few things your family can do to help reduce costs:

- Reduce your time in the shower by one minute every day. If you're a family of four, you could save £76 a year!
- Turn your appliances and electronics off - don't leave them on standby.
- Close the curtains in the evening to keep the heat in.
- Fill up the washing machine before putting it on. It saves more energy than doing two half loads. This is the same for the dishwasher and tumble dryer.
- Fill up the sink instead of running the tap while you do the washing up.
- Defrost your freezer. The smallest amount of ice build-up can cause the freezer to work harder to maintain its optimum temperature, consequently increasing your bill at the end of the month. Don't forget to empty it and turn it off first.
- Turn off the light if you're not in the room.
- Descale your appliances and fittings such as the shower head. We live in a hard water area and descaling them could improve the energy efficiency of your home.
- Turn down your thermostat by 1 degree to save up to 10% on your energy bill.
- Only boil the amount of water you need, the kettle uses a surprising amount of electricity.
- Unplug your device if it's had enough charge. It's a waste of energy to charge it if it doesn't need it and it's not good for the battery of your device.
- Turn the tap off when you're brushing your teeth or shaving, it can waste up to six litres of water per minute

If you think your bills are still too high and you don't remember the last time you changed your supplier, you might be paying more than you need to. When you join a company, they will offer you a fixed rate for a length of time, for example, £40 per month for a year. At the end of the year, they put you onto an indefinite variable rate, which is often more expensive and subject to change.

Make sure you shop around for the deal that suits you best by using comparison sites, Sevenoaks Switch and Save or contact Citizens Advice.

If you are worried that you won't be able to pay your bills, there is help available. Visit the Covid-19 page on our website [westkent.org/coronavirus](https://www.westkent.org/coronavirus), or contact your supplier to discuss your options.



# Linda Hogan Community Fund partners with the Kent Wildlife Trust



*We've partnered with the Kent Wildlife Trust to support new community activities in rural Romney Marsh.*

Romney Marsh has fewer activities and facilities available due to its remoteness and sparse population. For residents, this can mean heightened feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

A Linda Hogan grant was awarded to the Kent Wildlife Trust, they are the lead partner for the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme, delivering a variety of activities across Romney Marsh.

The Fifth Continent Scheme is delivering a number of heritage projects that offer opportunities for local residents to meet new people, gain new skills and knowledge, and come together to discover and restore the unique heritage of their local area.

Natasha at the Kent Wildlife Trust says:

*"Thanks to the generous support of the Linda Hogan Community Fund, we were able to purchase much-needed equipment to enable more local people to take part in the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme's heritage projects."*

*The grant allowed us to purchase a whole range of items, from buckets, and finds bags and trays, to ranging poles and OS maps. This has meant many more people have been able to get up close to the fascinating history of this area and to take part in activities, that they likely would otherwise not had the chance to experience."*

The Linda Hogan Community Fund was named after a member of our staff, Linda Hogan, who

supported many of our community initiatives but sadly died in 2009 after 11 years working with West Kent.

Grants of up to £500 help Kent-based groups to:

- get off the ground if they're new
- start up or expand their services and activities
- work with 'hard to reach' groups.

For more information about the fund, visit [westkent.org/lindahogan](https://westkent.org/lindahogan)





# What is shared ownership?

**Have you ever wondered what shared ownership actually means? If so, you're not alone!**

The concept of shared ownership can be confusing, so the National Housing Federation (NHF) decided to create a nationwide campaign to help people understand it a bit better, raise awareness of the benefits and tackle some common myths. They have created a brand-new website with lots of information, and you'll spot posters and press coverage up and down the country.

Shared ownership offers a different way to buy a home. You buy a percentage and pay rent to a housing association on the rest. Over time, you can increase the share you own, and decrease the rent you pay. It means you need a smaller deposit and a smaller mortgage, so you can get on the housing ladder that bit sooner, but it's your house from day one. You don't have to share it with anyone, you choose how to decorate it and you decide when to sell it.

The sale of homes through shared ownership allows housing associations to raise funds to build more homes, for both shared ownership and rent.

**West Kent builds shared ownership homes across Kent, to suit a range of budgets and situations. Sophie Palmer, Head of Home Ownership says:**

*"We find shared ownership suits lots of different people. Many of our customers are first-time buyers, who wouldn't be able to afford a home on the open*

*market. Some may have been through a divorce and are looking for a fresh start, and we also sell homes to those needing to downsize or upsize. We are supporting the NHF's campaign as we know what a positive option shared ownership can be, but people just don't know about it"*

Generally speaking, you need to meet the following criteria to be eligible to buy a home through shared ownership:

- Your household income needs to be under £80k.
- You can't be the owner of another property.
- You'll need to show you have a good credit history, and can afford the regular payments and costs involved in buying a home.
- You should have savings or be able to put down at least 5-10% deposit on the share of the property you're buying.

**You can also take a quick quiz on the [sharedownership.net](https://www.sharedownership.net) website to check if you are eligible.**

**All the properties West Kent is currently selling can be found on the West Kent website. [westkent.org](https://www.westkent.org)**





# YOUR PROPERTY SEARCH MADE EASY

A brand-new property search feature, for shared ownership homes, has been launched on the West Kent website. You can now filter your search to your specific requirements. You can easily see details of all properties, including floor plans, local information and rent details. You can also find all the contact information for the sales team. One of the benefits of buying a shared ownership home through West Kent, is the dedicated sales team offering support and advice every step of the way. This feedback came from a recent happy customer and new home-owner, who was keen to praise a member of the West Kent sales team.

*"West Kent went above and beyond with us and were very patient with us being first time buyers and knowing very little about the process. Emily always replied to emails within a reasonable amount of time and had an answer to our questions. We didn't have the best time with other aspects of the process and Emily kept us grounded, I don't think we would have made it through without her."*

To find out more visit [westkent.org](http://westkent.org)



# RESIDENTS RUN DEMENTIA CAFÉ

## at Montgomery Court

Residents at Montgomery Court have opened a café to provide a safe space for people living with the effects of dementia. The monthly meet-ups are open to residents, as well as the wider local community, to connect, socialise and share information.

The café is led by residents, who are keen to use it as an opportunity to make a difference and raise awareness of dementia. There are group discussions about local and national policies and issues, talks from professionals, and those attending are encouraged to share their personal experiences of living with the condition.

Wayne Eaton, a resident at Montgomery Court who has been living with dementia for 15 years, was key in setting up the café. He told all those attending the opening event:

*"The café is not mine, I am just trying to help get it started, I've been going to other dementia cafés in Medway and developed contacts."*

In preparation for the café opening, Montgomery Court staff and residents attended Dementia Friends training sessions, an initiative run by the Alzheimer's Society. Dementia Friends learn more about dementia so they can offer support, raise awareness, and change perceptions about dementia.

The opening of the café was marked with tea and biscuits and lots of discussions about future plans. One resident commented that as well as finding the session enjoyable, it was very informative, leaving with the message that dementia *"is not just an age thing."*

**The café is currently closed, but is normally open from 2.30pm on the last Tuesday of each month at Montgomery Court, Wainscott, Rochester. For more information contact 01634 718333**



*"Rohan Charles, Peer Support Group Facilitator for the Alzheimer's Society for Kent & Medway, facilitating Dementia Friends training session for staff and residents at Montgomery Court"*

# On your bike!

As the saying goes, you never forget how to ride a bike, but one in eight adults has never learned, meaning they can't enjoy all the benefits two wheels can bring. Better Medway has joined forces with our Abacus Furniture Project to provide bikes and cycling lessons to adults in the Medway area.

West Kent's Abacus shops sell refurbished bikes as a result of a unique partnership with HM Rochester Prison and Youth Offending Institute and Medway Norse. The bikes, collected at waste and recycling centres, are refurbished at the prison, giving offenders new skills as part of a City and Guilds qualification. They are then sold through our Abacus shops, meaning customers can access a wide range of safe, renovated bikes for children and adults at a very reasonable price.

Adults in Medway who can't ride a bike, or don't feel confident, can now sign up for beginners cycling lessons with Better Medway. They will get two free sessions and by the end of the course they will be able to start, stop and ride a short distance with confidence. Anyone who wants to develop their cycling further can then join one of Active Medway's cycling groups, suitable for adults of all abilities, particularly those returning to cycling and beginners. All groups are led by ride leaders to offer support.

Cllr David Brake, Medway Council's Portfolio Holder covering Public Health, said:

*"We are pleased to be able to offer cycling lessons for beginners to help them gain confidence riding a bike. The sessions are also suitable for adults who perhaps*



*would like to remind themselves of this life skill. Cycling is a fantastic way to keep healthy and I would encourage residents to get in touch to find out more about the sessions as well as our active cycling groups."*

For more details about cycling in Medway email [cycling@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cycling@medway.gov.uk)

To view the range of bikes on offer at Abacus, follow them on Facebook @abacusfurnitureproject

- Sevenoaks Warehouse: Abacus House, Greatness Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN14 5BQ
- Maidstone Abacus: 1 Northumberland Court, Northumberland Road, Shepway, ME15 7JT
- Medway Abacus: Unit 3 & 4, Thetford House, Walderslade Village, Chatham, ME5 9LR

## Wartime gunpower factory gets refurb

Eight wartime buildings will be restored at a new development in Faversham. Oare Lakes is a former gunpowder factory and gravel works. The factory was closed shortly before World War Two, because its proximity to London and the River Thames made it a high risk target for aerial bombardment.

This 131-acre site will be transformed to house 330 families, create a public country park with a lake and build an educational hub dedicated to the heritage of the site.

**We have purchased 34 homes - 16 for shared ownership sale and 18 for affordable rent.**



# Painting and decorating success

*An empty home in Swanley recently received a make-over by a group of tenants. Seven residents tried their hand at painting and wallpapering, at our second successful painting and decorating workshop.*



Tony, a decorator with Ian Williams, demonstrated the best way to prepare walls and woodwork, as well as giving some valuable top tips. Attendees learnt the best way to wallpaper around a plug socket, which paintbrush to use depending on what they're painting and what 'soaking time' means.

These four-hour workshops aim to help tenants feel more confident about decorating their home to make it look and feel fresher. All the residents were given a starter kit to put their new skills into practice, that included a paint tray and paintbrushes.

It wasn't all about painting and decorating, our residents were also given practical plumbing advice such as what to do if you have a leak, where all the main valves are located and how to re-pressurise a boiler. Louis, Lead Maintenance Engineer with iNHomes - our in-house repairs team - offered advice to help prevent damage to the home in the case of a leak.



**Audrey, who attended the course, said:**

**"I would highly recommend the painting and decorating workshop. I learned so much and took away loads of tips"**

# SPOTLIGHT ON

## Resident engagement

Resident engagement is about involving residents to help us improve our services. You are the best people to tell us what we're doing well, and what we could do better. We want residents to challenge, check and scrutinise what we do, and to help us create services that meet everyone's needs.

For when a   
or even a   
isn't enough...

  
 Your chance to tell us what you think



Following the Grenfell tragedy, the government published a Green Paper (an outline of possible policy changes) for social housing, and it had a strong message about empowering residents and making sure landlords are listening to their concerns. Housing providers up and down the country are opening up channels of communication and are asking residents to help them provide a better service.

West Kent has always provided opportunities for residents to have their say, and there are different ways of doing this. Here's a quick reminder of the ways you can get involved and hopefully one will work for you.

- **Social media** – if you haven't got much time follow and like us on social media - we are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. We

use Facebook a lot to post information and updates. We also like to chat and connect with tenants here, so please join us.

- **Surveys** – these are usually very quick and involve a few questions about a particular issue or service area. You need to make sure we have your consent to contact you, so you don't miss out on opportunities to take part.
- **Online discussion group** – we have a closed Facebook group, just for West Kent tenants. This group gives you the chance to have your say at a time that suits you. Topics from our face-to-face events and workshops are posted here, so anyone who can't make an event, can still get involved.
- **Estate walks** - West Kent's Tenancy Services Officers (TSOs) complete regular estate walks to identify any issues that may need



tackling. Residents are welcome to join them, by contacting their TSO directly. Email [mytenancy@wkha.org.uk](mailto:mytenancy@wkha.org.uk) to find out your TSO's contact details.

- **Regular and one-off workshops** – we hold workshops at least three times a year. These events take place over an afternoon and usually cover a whole range of subjects. We sometimes hold one-off workshops to look at a particular topic. You don't need any expertise to join in the discussions, it's just great to have input from tenants. Refreshments are provided and travel costs are reimbursed.

- **Scrutiny** – as the name suggests, scrutiny is about putting a service under the spotlight for an in-depth examination. It's a bit more involved than our other activities, but training is available, it can help build your skills and CV, and it can be very rewarding- you get the chance to get really involved with what's happening at West Kent. If you are interested in joining our scrutiny panel, or would like to know more about scrutiny, email [residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk) or call us on 01732 749447.

Workshops have been paused for the moment due to Covid-19, and we'll start these again when we can. In the meantime, please join our online discussion group.



# What's been happening ? so far this year !

- **Scrutiny boot-camp**

A dedicated group of residents attended an all-day 'boot-camp' to have an in-depth look at the West Kent complaints procedure. It's called a boot-camp because so much gets done in one day- it's tough, but effective! Letters and processes were reviewed and a number of recommendations for change were made.

- **Annual report workshop**

This was a face-to-face workshop held at the Sevenoaks office. There was lots of discussion about what residents want in an annual report and other housing providers' reports were shared to get ideas. This topic was also discussed in the online discussion group. The report will be published in early summer and, where possible,

will incorporate suggestions made at the workshop and in the online group.

- **Contacting you**

The General Data Protection Regulation came into effect in May 2019 and it means we have changed the way we contact you about resident involvement opportunities. We now need your permission to contact you about resident involvement, so please let us know if you are happy for us to do this. If you have already replied to the letter or email we sent you, that's great, and it means you are on our contact list so you'll hear about what's happening. But if not please email [residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk) or call us on 01732 749447 to tell us you'd like to be on our contact list, so you don't lose your voice.

# TURNING WORK EXPERIENCE INTO A CAREER

A week's work experience opened up a whole new world of work for our latest recruit, Tom.

*"I didn't even know youth work was a job"*

our new Youth Apprentice, Tom, told us last year when he spent a week at West Kent on work experience.

Tom wasn't sure what he wanted to do after he left school, he just knew he didn't want an office job. Work experience provides a glimpse of what we do at West Kent, the social housing sector and highlights career options that may not have been considered before.

For his week of work experience, Tom shadowed the youth team, income, communications and engagement, community safety and our sales team.

Tom admitted *"I expected my work experience to be really dull and boring, but West Kent staff proved me wrong by giving me a great week and keeping me doing things all the time"*.



Tom's favourite part of his week was spent with our youth team. He went to a local primary school with our Schools' Worker, Ellie to deliver the healthy lifestyles programme that focuses on physical, emotional and mental wellbeing and resilience. Charlotte, Community Investment Manager, was really impressed with Tom, she said *"he was really engaged with the work and great with the young people"*.

When a youth apprenticeship vacancy came up, Tom jumped at the opportunity to join the team and start his career. He joined the team in March.

If you're interested in work experience with West Kent, please email our training and employment team on [westkentworks@wkha.org.uk](mailto:westkentworks@wkha.org.uk).



# CookHOUSE Youth Project



HOUSE, West Kent's award-winning youth group in Edenbridge for 11-19 year olds, has launched a new life skills course, **'CookHOUSE'**, to help young people learn to prepare delicious, healthy meals.

Cooking was always a popular activity at the weekly youth group, and when the opportunity came along to run a structured course, Youth Leader Cheryl Banks jumped at it. She says,

*"We know the importance of developing life skills for young people, the ability to cook can offer young people a way to relax and connect with others, which will have a really positive effect on mental health too."*

The course also covers information about balanced diets, raises awareness of career opportunities in the food sector and offers an accredited food hygiene qualification.

The weekly cook-up takes place in a specialist kitchen at the Eden Centre. All the young people involved create recipe files, so they can share their new skills with their families and friends. So far, dishes have included spaghetti bolognese and a very ambitious eggs benedict- which the young people pulled off perfectly!

Charlotte Ede, Community Investment Manager at West Kent explains more about the project,

*"We are so pleased to be running this new project, thanks to funding from The Green Family and Kent Community Foundation. A key part of what HOUSE does is equip young people with the skills they need for the future while they are having fun, and this course provides the perfect mix of education and recreation."*

HOUSE runs on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and is open to all local young people aged 11-19. Facilities at HOUSE include games consoles, pool tables, music studio and tuck shop. Support is also offered around homework, mental health and wellbeing and there are also regular off-site trips. The CookHOUSE project ran until March 2020 and the Youth team hopes to secure more funding to run the courses again.

**To find out more about West Kent's youth services visit [westkent.org/youth](https://westkent.org/youth) and you can follow HOUSE on Facebook to stay up to date @HOUSEintheedencentre**

**We are currently delivering sessions online due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Please check our Facebook page for updates.**

# Adapting to a DIGITAL WORLD

*We've had to adapt pretty quickly to this new lockdown world. Here are some of the things that we're doing differently.*

We've moved our youth clubs and activities online. Our amazing youth team has put together programme of activities that are being delivered on the app Zoom. A big thank you to all the young people who have participated in our sessions and provided us with valuable feedback about what they want our digital service to look like. You can find out more about our Zoom sessions by going to [www.westkent.org/zoom](http://www.westkent.org/zoom) and filling out our request form.

We've sent a care package to each young person who has participated in our Zoom programme, as a thank you, and to let them know we're thinking of them. Those in the 8-12 age range received Easter themed activity books with colouring pencils and felt tips, while those in the 13-19 age range received mindful colouring books with pens and pencils.

For young people who are struggling or feeling overwhelmed, we are providing a 121 chat service. Young people are asked to pop us an email to: [youthservices@wkha.org.uk](mailto:youthservices@wkha.org.uk) with their full name and mobile number, letting us know they'd like us to give them a call.

We've launched a new TikTok video challenge, with shopping vouchers to be won, find us on TikTok as: [westkentyouthservices](https://www.tiktok.com/@westkentyouthservices), where we'll be posting lots of challenges to give young people something creative to do.

We're posting lots on our social media channels, for information and for fun, and have a dedicated website page for all Covid-19 information. Get our latest updates:

**Facebook:** [WestKentYouthServices](https://www.facebook.com/WestKentYouthServices)

**Instagram:** [@westkenthousingassociation](https://www.instagram.com/@westkenthousingassociation)

**TikTok:** [@westkentyouthservices](https://www.tiktok.com/@westkentyouthservices)

**Web:** [westkent.org/youth](http://westkent.org/youth)

## ONE BIG FAMILY HELPING THE HOMELESS



One Big Family  
Helping the  
Homeless

Each year, our staff support a local charity working within the Kent and Medway area.

This year's charity is One Big Family - Helping the Homeless. One Big Family is a dedicated charity, supporting homeless and vulnerably-housed people in Medway and Yorkshire.

The charity was founded in 2014 by Darren and Elizabeth Shaw, growing over the years to provide almost 1,000 beds to rough sleepers over the winter months. The charity also provide homeless people with food, hygiene products, clothing and support in both Medway and Yorkshire.

Elizabeth said:

*"We are a small charity, run entirely by volunteers, who work tirelessly to help the homeless and those in financial crisis locally - so we truly appreciate all donations, especially those from organisations we work alongside."*

One Big Family volunteers have recently been busy delivering food parcels, clothing and other essential items to homeless people in temporary accommodation due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Last year, we supported West Kent Mind, raising £8,258.14 for the charity.



# Coronavirus (Covid-19)

## Protecting tenants and workers to ensure that essential services are maintained



In response to the latest advice from the government, we've had to make a number of changes to the services we deliver to you.

Because we are now required to only leave home if it is essential, most of our employees will be working from home.

We are only carrying out emergency repairs. If you contact us for an emergency repair, we will ask you a few basic questions in relation to Coronavirus/COVID-19 to ensure we maintain both your safety and that of any West Kent employee or contractor who visits your home.

We've also introduced a temporary complaints policy, which has changed our timescale for responding to 20 working days.

If you have a communal garden or outdoor space, please make sure it is only used by one household at a time. All households need the opportunity to use this space, so please limit your time to one hour per day.

If you're experiencing financial difficulty and are worried about paying your rent, please talk to us so we can help. Call 01732 749400.

For more information about what we're doing to prevent the spread of coronavirus in our communities, visit [westkent.org/coronavirus](https://westkent.org/coronavirus)



Places to live  
Space to grow

# Neighbourhood News survey

Please complete this survey to be in with a chance of winning £50 of shopping vouchers. Just tear off this page and return to 101 London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1AX, or take a photo of it and email [communicationsteam@wkha.org.uk](mailto:communicationsteam@wkha.org.uk). Remember to include your name and address, so we can get back to you.

How much of Neighbourhood News do you read each time? *(please tick one)*

- ☐ € I read it from cover to cover every time
- ☐ € I skim it and read articles that grab my attention
- ☐ € I don't really read it.

How would you describe Neighbourhood News? *(please tick one)*

- ☐ € It's useful, I like to be kept up to date on what is happening at West Kent
- ☐ € I think it's a waste of money.

How could we improve Neighbourhood News?

---

---

---

---

# GETTING IN TOUCH

## CUSTOMER SERVICES

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

Email: [help@wkha.org.uk](mailto:help@wkha.org.uk)

Web: [westkent.org](http://westkent.org)

Phone: 01732 749400

## REPORT A REPAIR

Web chat: [westkent.org](http://westkent.org)

Email: [help@wkha.org.uk](mailto:help@wkha.org.uk)  
remember to give your name and address

Phone: 01732 749400 between 8am and 5pm

0800 1691122 in emergencies at other times

## WANT TO MAKE A PAYMENT?

Phone: 01732 749442

## WORRIED ABOUT PAYING YOUR RENT?

Contact us as soon as possible for help and advice

Phone: 01732 749400  
[westkent.org/payrent](http://westkent.org/payrent)

Follow us on social media:

Facebook: [WestKentHA](https://www.facebook.com/WestKentHA)

Twitter: [@West\\_Kent](https://twitter.com/West_Kent)

Instagram: [westkenthousingassociation](https://www.instagram.com/westkenthousingassociation)