



Residents' Annual Report 2019



WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Introduction



Over the past year we asked residents for their views about the content of this annual report and have included many of their suggested

changes. During the year we made additional efforts to involve and consult with residents in a variety of different ways – these are highlighted later in this report. Thank you for your willingness to be involved – we plan to build and improve on this in the coming months and years.

One very notable example of this was the excellent work by West Kent tenant representatives Linda Lee and Alan Flarry as members of the project team to evaluate bids from firms for our major maintenance contract. This was a large and complex project which resulted in a new long-term contract between West Kent and Brenwards to provide building and electrical services over the coming years. We thank Linda and Alan for their valuable input as part of the bid evaluation team.

West Kent celebrated its 30th birthday as an independent housing provider in 2019 and I'm pleased to say that we are continuing to grow and develop across the whole of the county. Last year we let 604 homes and built 280 new homes. We now have homes in 12 out of the 13 local government districts in Kent and Medway.

Another significant milestone in 2019 was the retirement of Frank Czarnowski, our Chief Executive of the last 10 years. After an extensive recruitment exercise which, again, involved residents in meetings with candidates we were delighted to appoint Tracy Allison as Chief Executive.



Our tenant Board Members Angela George, Megan Morven and Ben Cooper continue to play an important role in the governance of West Kent and I thank them for their excellent contributions to the Board throughout the last year.

As I write this introduction, the Coronavirus lockdown is in place, bringing a huge period of uncertainty to our country. The West Kent team has adapted very quickly to these new circumstances to continue to provide essential services to you. As soon as we are able, we will pick up our plans for the further development of West Kent through the remainder of 2020 and beyond.

Colin Wilby
Chair – Board of Management



Resident Introduction



I am one of the group of residents who worked with West Kent's engagement team to see how the Residents' Annual Report could be

improved. I think it is commendable and also encouraging for the residents that West Kent have asked for our input and I am pleased to see that working together has enabled them to make many of the changes we suggested. West Kent really does make a great effort to listen to their residents, not just on this subject but in other areas too. I hope that many more of you will consider participating in resident involvement; it can be very rewarding. The engagement team are very friendly and approachable. Plus, transport is provided or reimbursement made for petrol and parking – and there's always a good lunch! Come and join us!

Alison, involved resident.

Maintaining your home

We've shown here, the numbers of home improvements we made last year, how many we had hoped to do in 2019 and our targets for 2020.

	Completed	Target	Target 2020
Central heating systems	6	10	10
Kitchens	154	172	99
Bathrooms	138	125	98
Windows	21*	22	14
Doors	206	206	116
Boilers	368	369	353
Roofs	4	6	10
Air source heating	51	66	23
Electric storage heating	42	38	39

*we also upgraded the communal windows at Queens Court in Edenbridge.

You can report a repair through our new portal.

Log on to westkent.org and at the top right hand corner click My West Kent.

You can choose a time slot that suits you and cancel or re-arrange any existing repair appointments that you have with us.

Maintaining your home

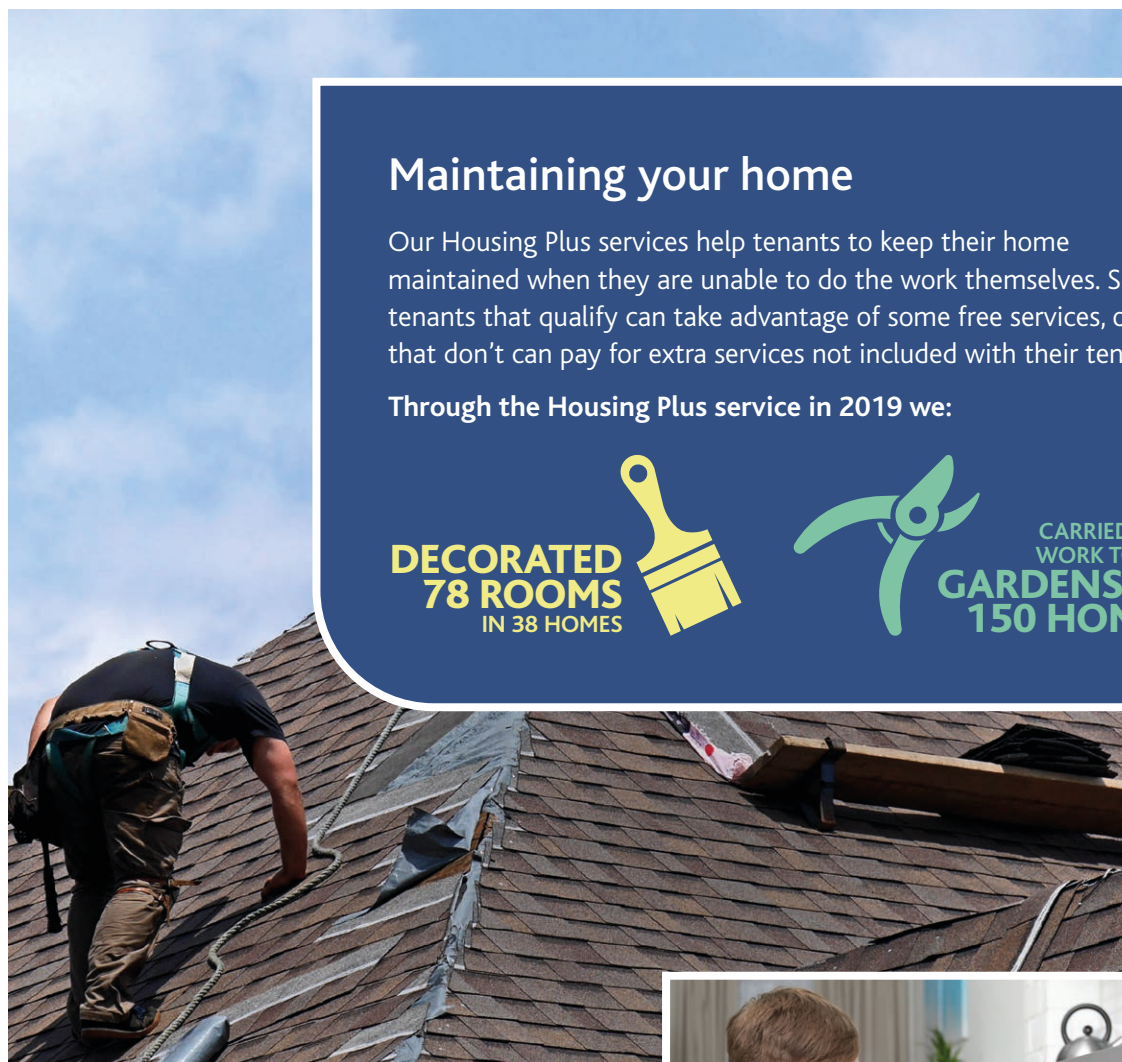
Our Housing Plus services help tenants to keep their home maintained when they are unable to do the work themselves. Some tenants that qualify can take advantage of some free services, others that don't can pay for extra services not included with their tenancy.

Through the Housing Plus service in 2019 we:

**DECORATED
78 ROOMS
IN 38 HOMES**



**CARRIED OUT
WORK TO THE
GARDENS OF
150 HOMES**



In 2019 we spent **£17.4m** on all maintenance including component replacement such as new doors etc. This equates to roughly **£2,570** per rented home.



Contractors

West Kent has a number of contractors that we employ to undertake specific areas of work. Here is an overview of this work:



BRENWARDS

Building and Electrical Services

- spent £8.8 million
- 21,981 jobs were carried out

Brenwards achieved 98% on their delivering on our repairs promise. The budget was underspent by £162K - a saving of 1.8%, this was mainly due to reduced kitchen and bathroom replacements.

BRIDGLANDS

Grounds Maintenance

Bridglands performance has improved to 88.35% (in 2018 it was 73.72%). The target was 94%

The amount spent on grounds maintenance of £552,313 is below the target budget figure of £564,294 for 2019.

MILA

Window and Door Repairs

Mila Maintenance Ltd completed 1,759 repair orders during 2019 this is less than 2018. The target budget for this work was met.

Mila's performance has been poor during 2019 with their overall performance on delivering on their repairs promise achieving 86.8% below our 90% target. The contract is being re-tendered in 2020.

INHOMES

Gas Servicing and Plumbing (in house team)

- spent £3.2 million
- 21,287 jobs were carried out including servicing our gas properties

iNHomes overall performance (for jobs completed on time) was 88.5%. (target 96%).

Our Handyperson service carried out 4,086 jobs, this includes:

- fire alarm and emergency light testing within our older persons' schemes
- repairs in residents' homes such as window handle replacements
- repairs to garages
- helping maintenance or gas engineers with jobs that require two people

4,012 (98.2%) were completed on time.

WEALDENS

Communal Cleaning

Spent £187,508

Wealden's cleaning inspection average is 96.8%.

Wealden experienced staff losses in 2019 and found it hard to recruit reliable cleaning staff.



Letting our homes

We let 604 properties in 2019, 215 of these were newly built homes

The average number of days we took to let them was 28 days, our target is 20 days

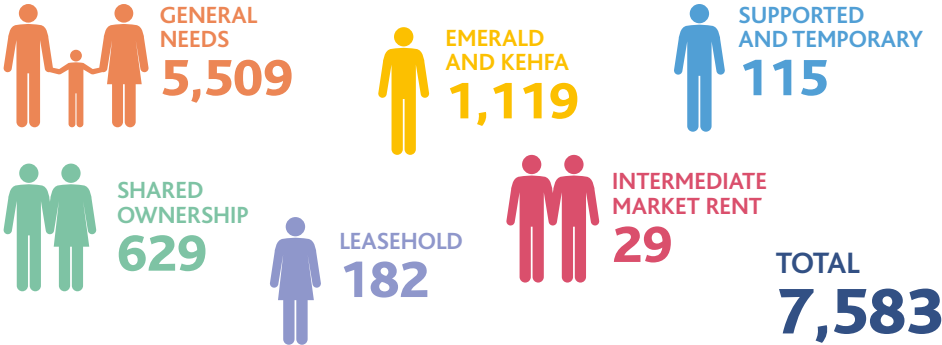


About our allocations:

- 58 households were transfers from other landlords
- All had a local connection
- 52 were homeless
- 72 were mutual exchanges

We made 18 evictions in 2019, this is one more than 2018. 13 of these were because the tenants continuously failed to pay their rent, one was for antisocial behaviour, the others were for both.

Who is living in our homes?



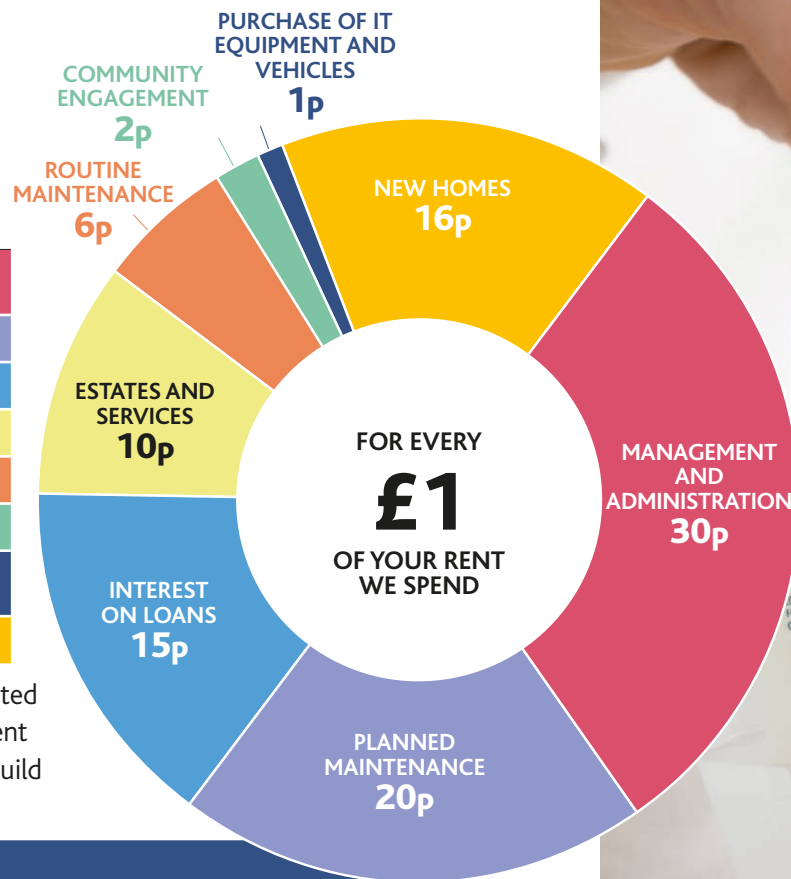
How your rent is spent

For every £1 we spend

	2019 (pence)	2018 (pence)
MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION	30p	28p
PLANNED MAINTENANCE	20p	17p
INTEREST ON LOANS	15p	16p
ESTATES AND SERVICES	10p	10p
ROUTINE MAINTENANCE	6p	5p
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	2p	2p
PURCHASE OF IT EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES	1p	1p
NEW HOMES	16p	21p

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Your 16p for new homes was then supplemented with a further 93p from bank loans, government grant and shared ownership sales income to build 280 new homes in 2019.



Average rents comparison 2019

Per week (48 week)	1 bed flat	3 bed house
Social rent	91.16	123.40
Affordable rent	125.40	170.78

Affordable rents are set at up to 80% of the market rate

Social rents are determined through a national rent regime – changes to social rents, whether up or down, are controlled by central government.



Collecting rent

Thank you to the majority of our residents who pay their rent on time. Our arrears were just 1.9% in 2019. The income team works with residents to manage their rent payments and offers help to those that need it to manage household bills.

Keeping **you** safe

Fire

- We carry out regular checks of communal parts of our blocks of flats called fire risk assessments. If you want to see the one for your block contact customer services.
- We have fitted your home with smoke detectors, which you should test once a week.
- We ensure your electrics are safe and check them regularly.
- Our cleaners help to keep corridors clear of clutter and report if fire doors are damaged.

Asbestos

- We know which of our homes have asbestos in them and let residents know if it is in their home when they sign up.
- Our contractors are trained in asbestos awareness.
- We regularly check the condition of the known asbestos- containing materials and will remove them if they become a risk.

Gas

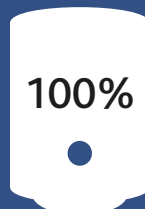
- We meet our legal requirements under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 by carrying out regular inspections and installing carbon monoxide detectors where we have gas or solid fuel appliances.

We carried out



**fire risk assessments
in 2019**

We carried out



**of our gas safety
checks in 2019**

Legionella

- We have carried out risk assessments for all of the water services in our homes. External specialist consultants carry out an annual inspection where there is a high risk.
- For low risk sites we carry out a random sample of inspections.

Keeping **your** neighbourhoods **safe**

Our community safety and tenancy services teams work hard with the Police and other agencies to keep your neighbourhoods clean, safe and green. We act on all reports of antisocial behaviour, the table below gives a breakdown of these compared to last year.

	2019	2018
Noise	69	91
Harassment / threatening behaviour / intimidation	82	113
Drugs	52	41
Litter	17	29
Pets / animal nuisance	24	29
Domestic abuse	38	22
Access	10	30

We dealt with 38 cases of serious domestic abuse, this is 35% more than in 2018.

Our tenancy services team can offer confidential help and support to anyone suffering, or affected by domestic abuse.

You can report antisocial behaviour through the website – log on to westkent.org and search 'report anti-social behaviour'.



Mandie Stallard at a 'Love your dog' roadshow

Complaints



397
compliments



617
complaints

Last year we received:

Of these

573 were making it right – the first stage of our complaints process

38 were complaint reviews – the next stage of our complaints process if a customer is not happy with our making it right response or outcome.

(14 out of the 38 of these were agreed)

6 were complaint appeals – the final stage of our complaints process. (one of these was agreed)

Out of all of our complaints, 71% of them

were completed within the 10 working day target. Those completed after the 10 working days required further investigation and the majority were extended with agreement from the customer.

459 NUMBER OF MISSED APPOINTMENTS BY US

(1.9% OF TOTAL JOBS WERE MISSED)

1,289 NUMBER OF MISSED APPOINTMENTS BY TENANTS

(WHERE CANCELLATIONS ARE MADE ON THE DAY)

Reasons for complaints:

The main source of complaints continues to be repairs and maintenance and mainly about:

- The quality of repairs
- The length of time for repairs

Other areas of complaints include:

- Disputing recharges or missed appointment charges
- Housing and estate management (cleaning and grounds maintenance)
- Compensation for damaged items
- Staff, including contractors (attitude/behaviour)



Ombudsman

We had five complaints closed by the Ombudsman in 2019, in four there was no maladministration on our part. They were concerning:

- A compensation claim for damaged items following a roof leak where we were not at fault. We explained this and provided the tenant guidance on how to claim on their contents insurance.
- Work to electrics in garage that we wouldn't carry out because they were gifted as a tenant improvement during the mutual exchange. Although an error was made on our part, we rectified it quickly and they were happy with how we explained the tenant's responsibilities.
- How we handled a customer's anti-social behaviour case, parking issues and reports about noise nuisance

from residents using an access path. We investigated and addressed the customer's concerns and offered several proportionate solutions.

- A tenant who was unhappy with a letter he received from West Kent about being verbally abusive to a member of staff. We took reasonable steps to investigate the complaint with a balanced and proportionate approach.

In one we were found to be partially at fault:

- We failed to clearly explain why the leak was considered an accident and we were ordered to write a letter to the tenant to explain further. Following this we changed our process so that complaint reviews would require a written response.

Annual report- resident involvement

During 2019, we extended the ways that residents can get involved at West Kent. There are now a range of flexible options for residents to tell us their views and help improve our services.

In 2019:

9

RESIDENTS

REVIEWED OUR ANNUAL REPORT

68

RESIDENTS

JOINED OUR ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUP

3

RESIDENTS

SAT ON THE INTERVIEW PANEL TO RECRUIT OUR NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

9

RESIDENTS

CAME TO A SCRUTINY BOOT-CAMP ABOUT COMPLAINTS

2

RESIDENTS

WORKED ON A SIX-MONTH TENDER PROCESS TO SECURE A BUILDING AND ELECTRICAL CONTACT AND AWARDED BRENNARDS THE CONTRACT

160

RESIDENTS

AND THEIR FAMILIES RECEIVED FREE PANTOMIME TICKETS FROM WEST KENT AFTER JOINING THE NEW ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUP

100

RESIDENTS

RESPONDED TO OUR PETS POLICY SURVEY, AND MORE RESIDENTS ARE NOW ALLOWED TO HAVE PETS IN THEIR HOMES

43

RESIDENTS

ATTENDED FOUR WORKSHOPS IN SWANLEY AND EDENBRIDGE AND DISCUSSED REPAIRS, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE LINDA HOGAN GRANTS

IN TOTAL

966 RESIDENTS

GAVE THEIR VIEWS ON OUR SERVICES

Spotlight on digital engagement

2019 saw the launch of the West Kent residents' discussion group. This group has enabled residents to make their voice heard at a time and place that suits them. As well as discussing broader topics, quick comments and feedback can lead to productive outcomes. Here is a summary of some of the comments in the discussion group, and West Kent's response:

To find out more about the ways you can get involved at West Kent visit westkent.org

You said	We did	So that
Why aren't estate walks publicised to residents?	Tenancy Services provided a timetable and contact details on the West Kent website, so tenants who want to go on estate walks can book in. This was publicised in Neighbourhood News and on social media.	Residents can feel engaged with their local area and let Tenancy Services Officers know of any issues that may need dealing with to help prevent reports of ASB.
You would like the annual report sent out with Neighbourhood News	The annual report will be sent to residents as an insert in the spring edition of Neighbourhood News	Residents can review the performance of West Kent, to make sure we are delivering on our promises.
West Kent's social media should be informal and relaxed	Our tone is informal and invites conversation	Residents feel able to communicate with us openly so we can provide the best service to them.
Can there be more residents' workshops in Edenbridge?	The spring workshop was due to be held in Edenbridge but will now be later because of the lockdown	A wider range of residents can get involved to tell us their views.

Complaints and resident scrutiny

At the end of 2019 a group of residents worked with us to scrutinise our complaints process and made suggestions about how we could improve it. Their suggestions that have been implemented include:

Training and discussions with staff must include more empathy	✓ We have built this into our training
Check 10% responses before they go out	✓ We are doing this
Avoid repetition	✓ We will check this in sampling and include it in our training
Investigate how other social landlords collect useful customer feedback	✓ We are looking at this as part of our review this year
Include honest feedback in Annual Report when things do not go so well as well as the positives	✓ We will do this.

Comments on the scrutiny session from residents that attended:

"Makes you think probably more than you already do."

"Discussion was interesting."



"Excellent preparation, delivery and inclusivity."

"Very informative and challenges even your way of thinking."

"Very enjoyable session and lots of fun with our group."

"Thought provoking."

Scrutiny boot camp

New Homes



At the end of December 2019 West Kent owned and managed the following numbers of homes across Kent. The map here shows how many of these are in each district

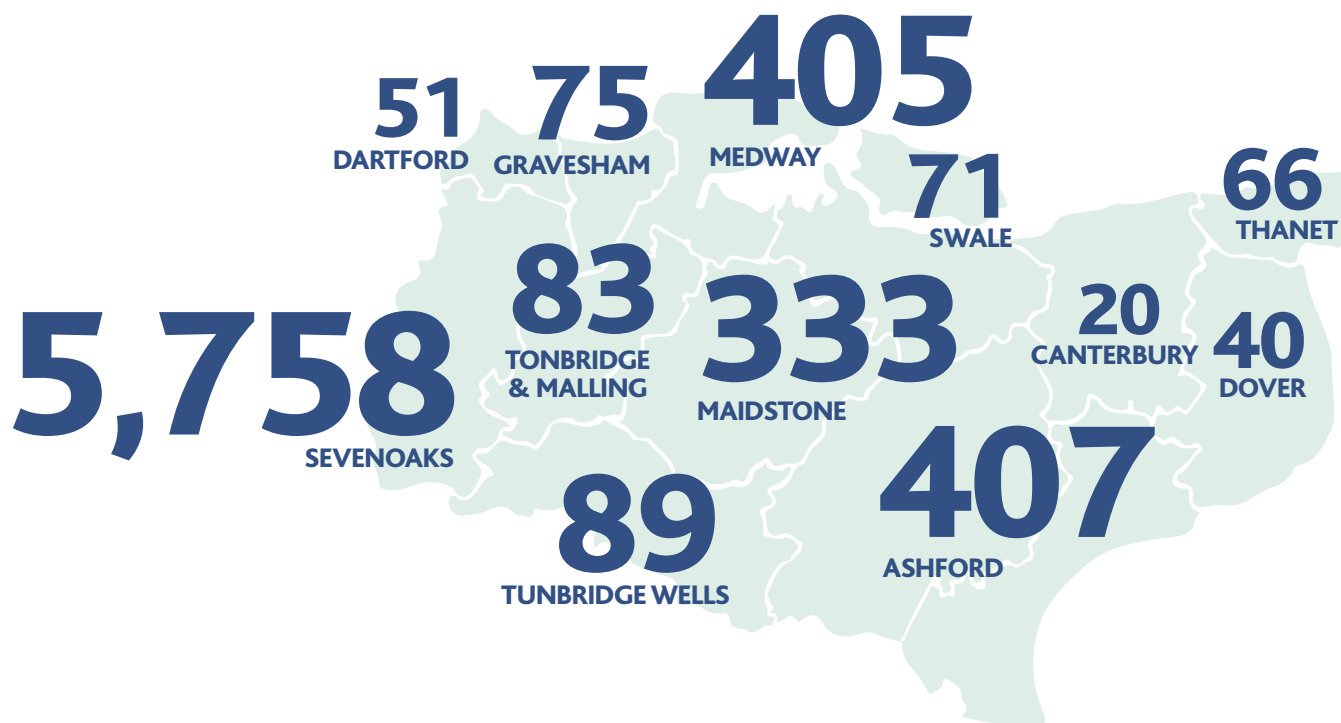
Rented	5,584
Rented – older people	1,119
Low cost home ownership	629
Rented - supported	69
Leaseholders	182
Total homes owned and managed	7,583
Homes under construction	384



We sold **81** shared ownership homes – compared to **43** in 2018 raising **£8.97 million** of sales income.



We also raised **£1.4m** from staircasing – shared ownership owners who have bought a larger share of their home.





Building our communities

Youth services

West Kent delivers a wide variety of youth services, mainly targeted around the Sevenoaks District. Our engagement ranges from arts and crafts, sports, formal training and skills development.

In 2019 at our various clubs:


WE HAD 11,474
ENGAGEMENTS WITH
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.


WE TOOK 35 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11-19 ON A TRIP TO THORPE PARK

WE TOOK 70 CHILDREN AGED 8-12 ON A SUMMER RESIDENTIAL




WE WORKED IN 18 SCHOOLS

We have a detached youth work team, meeting young people on the streets around the Sevenoaks District. We learn about where young people are gathering in public areas and work with them to respond to their issues and needs. This work varies based on the needs of the young people we meet and where they are at in their lives.

Financial Wellbeing Services

The financial wellbeing team worked with 179 people who live in our affordable rented homes in 2019, helping them with balancing a household budget, giving advice on reducing utility bills and ensuring they can afford their new home.

- More than 1,000 of our residents claim Universal Credit for their housing costs. We have arranged a direct payment for 200 of these because they were not paying on time and falling into arrears, or they were vulnerable.
- In 2019 we supported tenants to make 237 successful claims for Discretionary Housing Payments resulting in over £130,000 of extra housing support for our residents.



Painting and Decorating courses

Seven residents tried their hand at painting and wallpapering, at our second successful painting and decorating workshop.

The workshops helped tenants feel more confident about decorating their home to make it look and feel fresher.

They 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 pressurise a boiler.

All residents were given a starter kit to put their new skills into practice, which included a paint tray and paintbrushes.

Abacus Furniture Stores

We have Abacus Furniture stores in Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Medway. They provide low cost furniture to those in need, to divert good quality furniture from landfill and provide training & employment opportunities.





Training and Employment

We offer support to those looking to return to work and those wanting to get better paid work. The range of services covers CV writing, interview skills, internet job search, online applications and accessing work experience. We also offer apprenticeships, careers advice and a range of training courses. We work in partnership with local job centres, training providers and Housing Associations and Local Councils. The service is delivered through job hubs based within local communities, currently in Swanley, Sevenoaks, Maidstone and Tonbridge.

83 PEOPLE

SUPPORTED INTO TRAINING
AND EMPLOYMENT

160 PEOPLE

ATTENDED POP UP
BUSINESS SCHOOLS

**WE EMPLOYED
8 APPRENTICES,**
THREE WERE OFFERED
PERMANENT POSITIONS.



Older people

Case study

“Wayne lives in Montgomery Court, a scheme for over 55s in Medway. He is living with vascular dementia after a heart attack 15 years ago, having previously been a successful IT manager and then a college lecturer. Since his arrival he has gone from strength to strength, with only those close to him knowing about his vascular

dementia and more recent Alzheimer's diagnosis. He is using his IT skills to teach his neighbours about computers and holds a regular DJ and quiz night at the scheme. He says: "I waited a long time to get into Montgomery Court but it was worth it. I feel that I have made it home with a whole load of new friends."



**WE OWN
7,580 HOMES,**
1,117 OF THOSE ARE
EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE OVER 55s

Looking to 2020

We continue to invest in our existing homes, in 2020 we will spend: £831K on decorating the outside and communal areas of our homes



£831K

We will:



We are spending over £1million on Queens Court in Edenbridge making it fit for the future. We are replacing the windows, upgrading the communal lighting system, door entry systems, fire alarm and communal heating.

We didn't have the information to share with you that compares our performance to other housing associations but we are working on getting that for next year.

Contact us

Do you want to know more?

For more details about anything in the Residents' Annual Report, or if you would like to feedback to us about the publication please contact the **Communications and Engagement team:**
communicationsteam@wkha.org.uk

West Kent Housing Association

101 London Road, Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1AX

visit westkent.org
or call 01732 749400

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📷 @westkenthousingassociation