



Residents' Annual Report 2020



WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Introduction



I recall writing the introduction to last year's Residents' Annual Report only a few days after the country had gone into the first national

Coronavirus lockdown. Little did we then know how eventful the coming year would be!

The response by the West Kent team during this period of great uncertainty has been magnificent. They took only one day to reorganise their work patterns, focussing attention on the key priority of resident safety. Gas safety checks and essential repairs continued uninterrupted but even the inevitable backlog of 3,300 other repairs was cleared by the end of August.



In the meantime, the majority of our staff switched to working from home and carried on providing, as near as possible, a normal service; our resident engagement team found new ways to interact with residents via technology; our financial wellbeing team increased their work helping people during uncertain times and we introduced a new service called West Kent Together which kept in close contact with residents needing support.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which the organisation and you, our residents, changed the ways in which we worked together during 2020. This report gives many such stories of resilience and adaptation which we hope you will find interesting.



This report was shaped by valuable input from residents and we hope this reflects the type of content they want to see and read. Many thanks to those of you who put in the time and effort to help us in this way.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of our resident Board Members Angela George, Megan Morven and Ben Cooper who have played their valuable part in keeping the board and West Kent focused on our core priorities during these turbulent months. I would also like to thank the residents who have joined our new **scrutiny panel**. I am looking forward to seeing the results of their work.

Colin Wilby

Chair – Board of Management

Resident Introduction



Notwithstanding a difficult year for all of us, West Kent has continued to expand and develop in the pursuit of excellence. The opportunities

for residents to be involved are also increasing. A small group of us applied to and have been invited to form a scrutiny panel. This panel will review many services across West Kent, with the potential to suggest how a service may be improved and offer encouragement and recognition for a job well done. It is to West Kent's credit that they seek the views of their residents and are open minded enough to listen and change where appropriate.

West Kent is so much more than our landlord. They offer many services from help with employment and training to the fixing of that endless dripping tap. It is our home, therefore, our association. Get involved and help make a great organisation even better.

Jason, involved resident and scrutiny panel member

Where are our homes?



At the end of December 2020 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	5,878
Rented – older people	1,070
Shared ownership	706
Total social housing homes	7,654
Homes managed by others	7
Leaseholders	232
Total owned and managed accommodation	7,893
Homes under construction	471

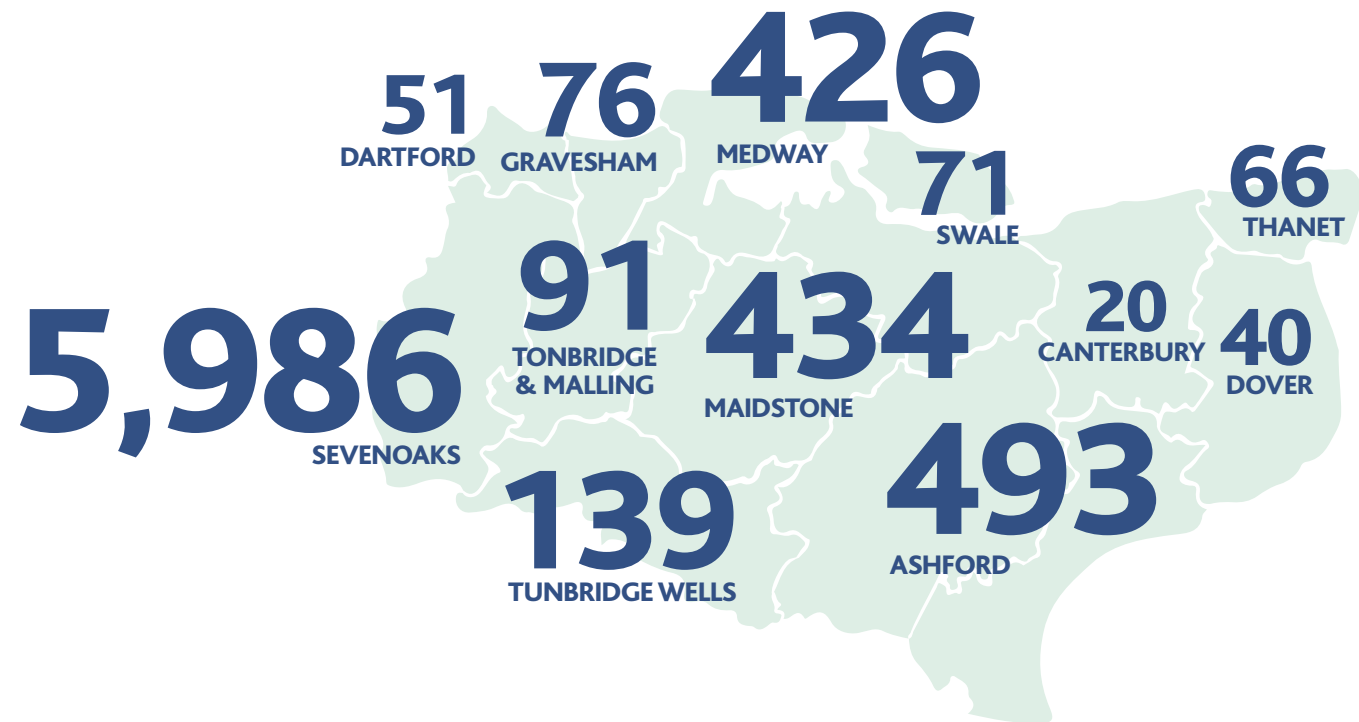
We saw increased demand for shared ownership in 2020, supported by the stamp duty holiday and people re-assessing where they live due to lockdown and being able to work from home.



We sold **112** shared ownership homes, compared with 81 in 2019. We raised **£12.45** million through sales income. This helps us fund new homes and keep rents affordable.



We completed **14** staircasing transactions which generated **£1,627,500** of income against a target of **£1.5m**

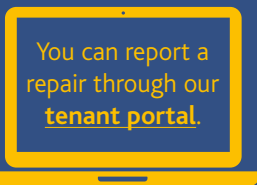


Maintaining your home

We've shown here, the numbers of home improvements we made last year, how many we had hoped to do in 2020 and our targets for 2021.

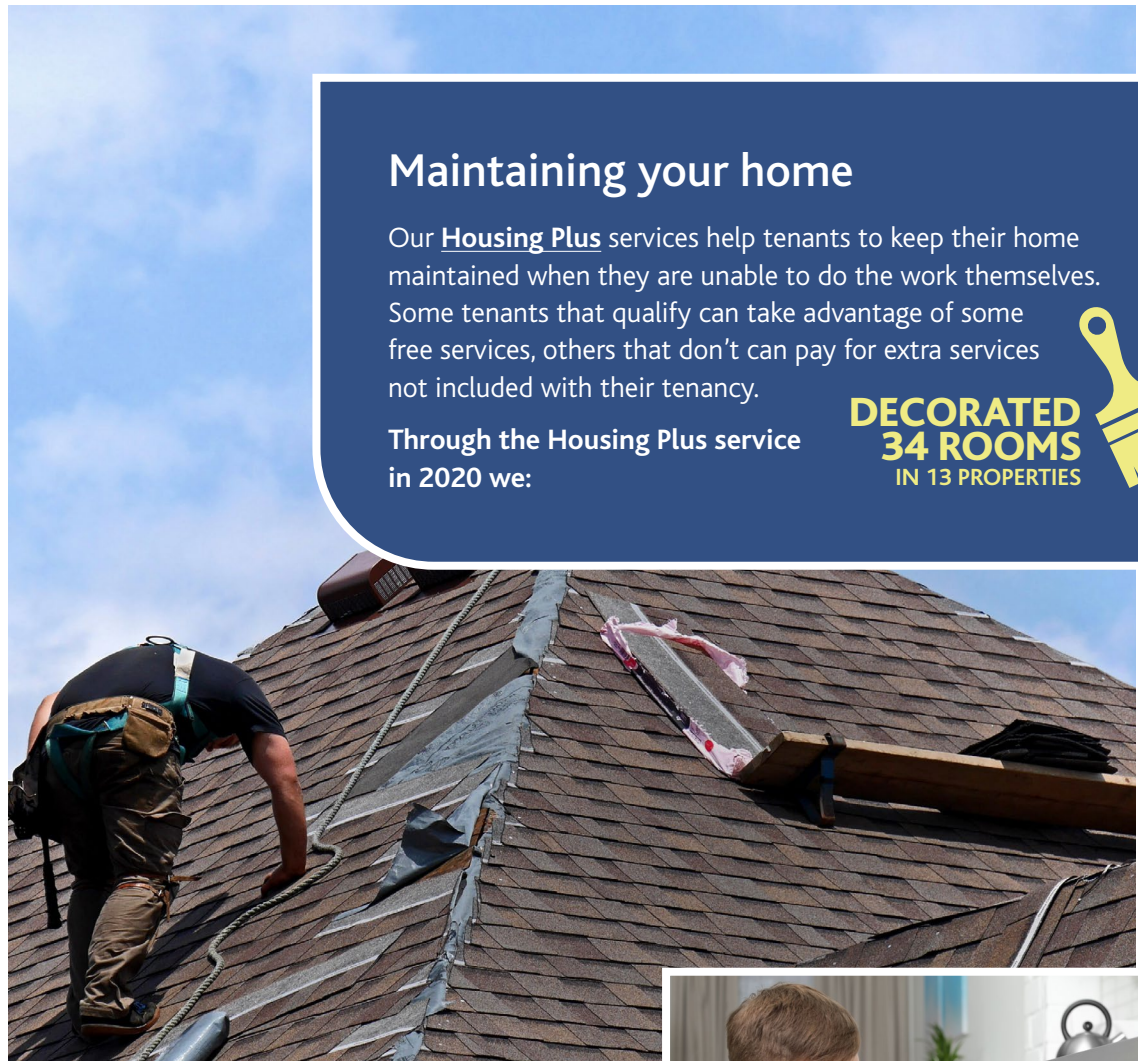
Many of our services were affected by Covid restrictions, and we needed to make sure all work was carried out safely, in line with guidelines, so this has affected our performance.

Replacement	Completed	Target	Target 2021
Bathroom	58	98	146
Boiler	281	353	320
Central heating install	7	10	4
Doors	172	116	158
Kitchen	78	99	110
Air source heating system	20	23	5
Electric heating system	39	39	30
Roofs	6	10	10
Windows	12	14	22



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 rearrange 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 2020 we:

DECORATED
34 ROOMS
IN 13 PROPERTIES




In 2020 we spent **£16.3 million** on all maintenance which is around **£2,345** per home.



Contractors

At the start of lockdown, our staff and contractors adapted quickly to ensure we could continue working in residents' homes safely. We prioritised emergencies initially and as restrictions eased, we caught up with the backlog of repairs and continued with business as usual, while following all Covid safe guidelines.



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

BRENWARDS

Property and electrical services

- Spent £8.2 million
- 19,733 jobs were carried out
- Completed 99.2% of jobs on target

BRIDGLANDS

Grounds maintenance

- Spend for year £812,528
- Jobs completed 1,109
- Completed in target 93.78%, Target 90%
- This is an improvement on last year's performance which was 88.35%

IAN WILLIAMS

Decorating services

Spend for year £527,938

Orders completed 735, made up of 462 general needs houses and flats, 113 leasehold flats in blocks, 160 garages in blocks.

76.2% of jobs were completed on target. The aim was to complete 96% of jobs in target, but the restrictions brought in by the first Covid lockdown meant there were a number of delays to completions.

INHOMES

Gas servicing and plumbing (West Kent staff)

- Spent £2.8 million
- 21,838 jobs were carried out - this includes gas safety checks and servicing
- iNHomes overall performance (for jobs completed on time) was 96.2%, exceeding the 96% target.

Our handyman service carried out 3,028 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

2,938 (97%) were completed on time.

MILA

Window and door repairs

Spend for year £220,740

1,830 repairs completed

In 2019, Mila's performance on delivering their repairs promise was 86.8%.

For 2020 their target was 96% and they achieved 97.81%

WEALDENS

Communal cleaning

Spent £293,823

97.4% of checks carried out by supervisors met the Wealdens quality mark.

The expenditure greatly increased this year as Wealden responded brilliantly to our requests for increased cleaning during the Covid crisis, helping keep our residents safe.



Letting our homes

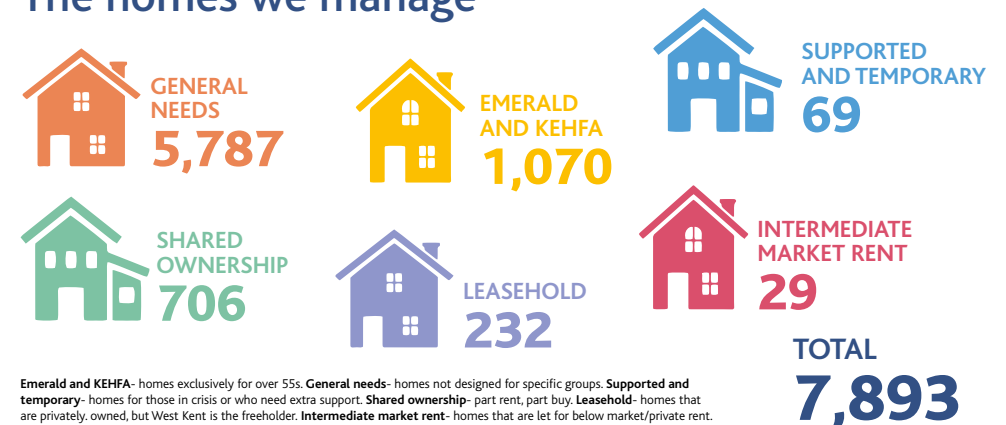
We let 549 homes in 2020, 156 of these were newly built homes. 86 were mutual exchange.



It took us an average of 52 days to re-let our homes to a new resident during 2020. We were aiming to re-let them in 20 days. It took longer than usual due to Covid and we are reviewing this process in 2021 to get homes let quicker to those who need them. The housing sector average* for the time it takes to let homes is 52 days.

In 2020, we made a commitment that no residents would lose their home as a result of Covid. We did take possession of two homes through the courts due to issues not related to Covid. We used injunctions on two occasions where there was nuisance behaviour, as an alternative to eviction.

The homes we manage



How your rent is spent

For every £1 we spend	2020 (pence)	2019 (pence)
MANAGEMENT AND OTHER EXPENSES	33	32
PLANNED MAINTENANCE	16	20
INTEREST ON LOANS	14	15
ESTATES AND SERVICES	10	10
ROUTINE MAINTENANCE	6	6
PURCHASE OF IT EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES	2	1
NEW HOMES	19	16



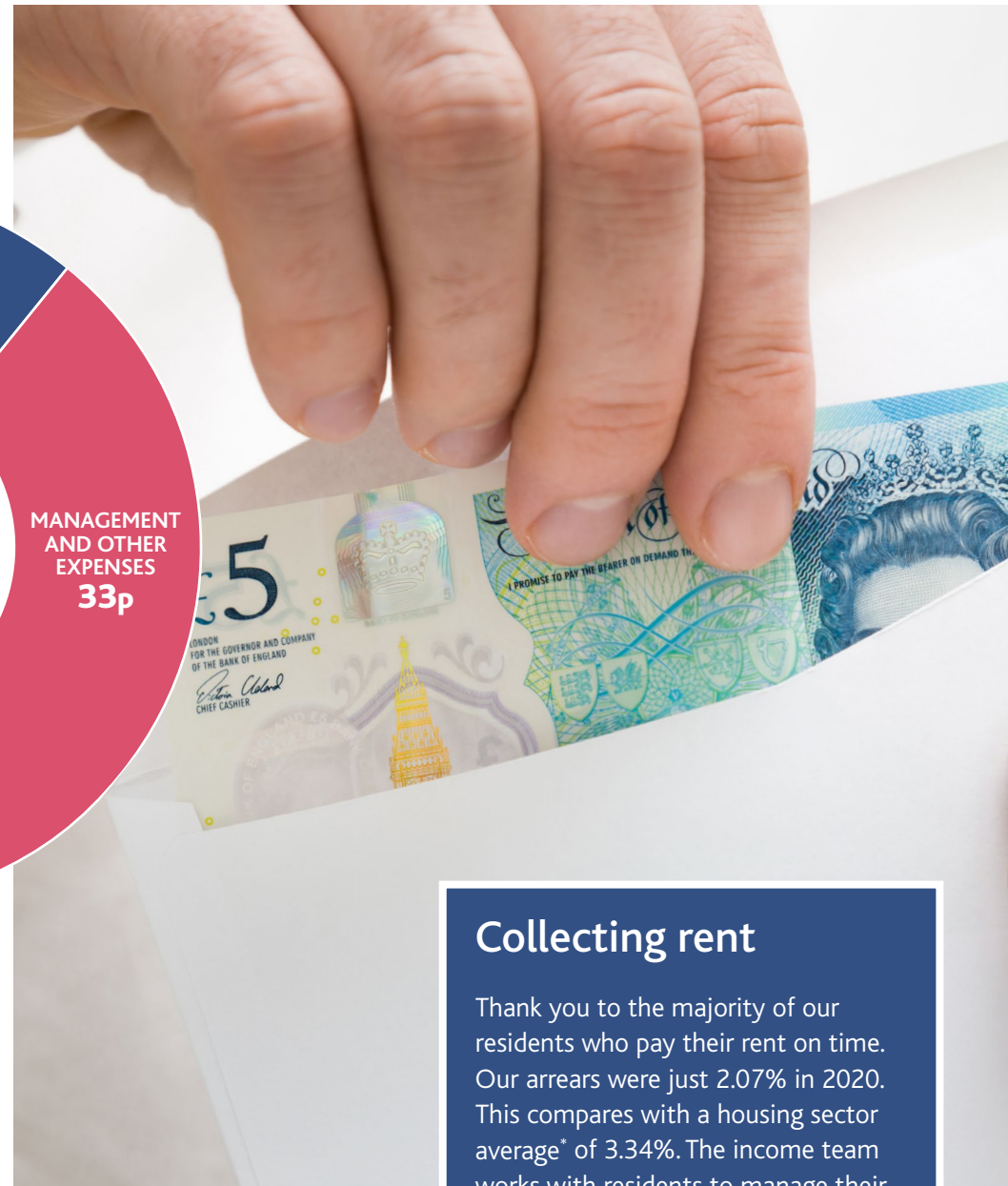
Your 19p for new homes was then supplemented with a further 80p from bank loans, government grants and shared ownership sales income to build 159 new homes in 2020.

Average rents comparison 2020

Per week (48 week)	1 bed flat	3 bed house
Social rent	£93.46	£126.67
Affordable rent	£126.18	£177.55

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 2.07% in 2020. This compares with a housing sector average* of 3.34%. 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 2020



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.

	2020	2019
Noise	153	69
Harassment / threatening behaviour / intimidation	133	82
Drugs	47	52
Litter	50	17
Pets / animal nuisance	44	24
Domestic abuse	47	38
Access	1	10

We have a dedicated area of our website with guidance about domestic abuse and a confidential form to report concerns. Our tenancy services team can offer help and support to anyone affected by domestic abuse.

We have seen a significant increase in reports of antisocial behaviour in 2020. We encourage residents to talk to each other as a first option to resolve any issues. To find out more, and to report issues, visit the 'your community' area of our website- westkent.org

Complaints

In 2020 we introduced a temporary complaints policy in response to Covid, with some changes to timescales. We also suspended missed appointment charges and payments.

Last year we received:

278
compliments



406
complaints



Of these

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

33 were complaint reviews – the next stage of our complaints process if a customer is not happy with our making it right response. (20 out of the 33 of these were agreed)

8 were complaint appeals – the final stage of our complaints process. (three of these were agreed)

Out of all of our complaints, 66% of them were completed within target.

Compliments from residents are usually about the standard of work completed and our staff – particularly our community and tenancy support teams.

“Thank you for being compassionate and honest about sensitive issues, you handled it with such professionalism and care.”

A compliment from a resident to our tenancy services team.

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:

- Housing and estate management (cleaning and grounds maintenance)
- Compensation for damaged items
- Staff, including contractors

Ombudsman

We had two complaints investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service in 2020 and we were found to be partially at fault in both cases. They concerned:

- How we handled a tenant’s antisocial behaviour case and concerns about the condition of their property. The Housing Ombudsman Service found that there were no issues with the condition of the property or how we handled complaints about the condition. But they found that we didn’t investigate the tenant’s concerns about how we handled their antisocial behaviour case as a formal complaint. Following this, we reviewed our internal guidance to be clear on when formal complaints should be raised.
- A tenant experienced a leak which damaged some of their personal property. We had accepted responsibility for the leak and offered compensation, but the Housing Ombudsman Service felt that the level of compensation we offered was too low. Following this, we changed the levels of compensation in our internal guidance and included more information to help staff calculate an appropriate amount.

In 2021 our complaints process changed in line with Housing Ombudsman Service requirements. Residents advised us on how we should communicate this change. See our website for more information – www.westkent.org/complaint

Resident involvement

In 2020, we had to change the way residents get involved at West Kent. Restrictions meant that we couldn't offer any face-to-face workshops or focus groups, apart from at the very start of the year. So we moved resident involvement online. As well as contacting you for your input by email and in our Facebook discussion group, we offered online workshops and focus groups. We also established our new scrutiny group through a series of online interviews and meetings.

In 2020:

9
RESIDENTS

REVIEWED OUR ANNUAL REPORT

7
RESIDENTS

ATTENDED A PAINTING AND DECORATING COURSE

8
RESIDENTS

CONTRIBUTED TO OUR INCOME CAMPAIGN

6
RESIDENTS

TESTED OUR NEW AUGMENTED REALITY REPAIRS SERVICE

130
RESIDENTS

RESPONDED TO OUR DOMESTIC ABUSE SURVEY AND 11 ATTENDED A FOCUS GROUP FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION.

6
RESIDENTS

ATTENDED A DISCUSSION GROUP WITH THE HOUSING DIVERSITY NETWORK TO DISCUSS WEST KENT'S APPROACH TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.

63
RESIDENTS

TESTED OUR WEBSITE SO WE CAN MAKE IMPROVEMENTS

18
RESIDENTS

CONTRIBUTED TO OUR ASB CAMPAIGN

2
RESIDENTS

JOINED OUR LINDA HOGAN COMMUNITY FUND PANEL

2
RESIDENTS

SAT ON INTERVIEW PANELS TO RECRUIT NEW PROPERTY DIRECTORS

1
RESIDENT

JOINED THE CORE GROUP FOR BRENWARDS

7
RESIDENTS

JOINED OUR NEW SCRUTINY PANEL

You said we did

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

You said	We did
'Add a resident's introduction to the residents' annual report.'	This has been added and will continue to be a regular feature.
'Send out the annual report in Neighbourhood News.'	This happened in 2020 and will happen again in 2021.
'Use a strong simple message for the income campaign eg- we will listen, we will help.'	'We will listen' became a headline for the campaign.
'The augmented reality repairs service is a game changer, especially in the present climate. I thought it was really good.'	After resident testing, the project was moved to the next stage and will be rolled out further in 2021.
'Make the website easier to navigate and improve the search function.'	Search function has been improved and work is being carried out to improve navigation and overall experience.
'More giveaways and offers in Neighbourhood News'	Johnstone's decorating discount promotion and voucher giveaway.

Although it was disappointing not to have face-to-face resident involvement activities in 2020, our online offer worked really well for some. One resident, Fen, came to several online sessions and told us,

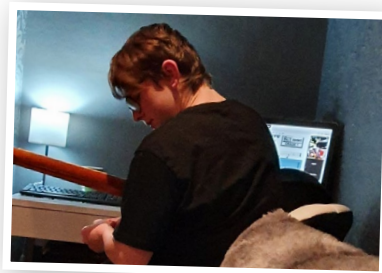
“ I have found over the years that my mobility isn't getting any better so when I found out that West Kent was moving events online, I was so pleased. I love helping out and this new development has given me the opportunity to do that without leaving the house. I really hope that you continue to use online involvement and that more residents get involved. ”



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. During 2020 the youth team moved most of their services online so that young people could still engage and connect.



WE HAD 2,996 ENGAGEMENTS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN 2020.

In 2020 we delivered;



320 ONLINE SESSIONS



125 COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSIONS



134 OTHER FACE-TO-FACE SESSIONS

The huge programme of activities we delivered was guided by the young people using the services and included:

-  Cooking
-  Basic sign language
-  Yoga
-  Online gaming
-  Boxing
-  Lego creation
-  Mental health support sessions
-  Keep fit
-  Arts and crafts

Calls to residents

In March 2020 we started calling all our residents over 70 to make sure they were OK and asked if they needed any support as a result of Covid and the national lockdown.

It was clear that some residents were very isolated and needed someone to talk to and some needed more specific support. What we learned from these calls resulted in a brand new service being established at West Kent.

West Kent Together

West Kent Together is a new community service, introduced in 2020 to help residents stay connected and supported through difficult times. It's a phone line residents can call to get help and support from specially trained staff. Residents can be linked with internal and external support services, whether it's needing food or medication delivered, employment advice, money advice or just someone to talk to.

We introduced this new service in 2020 because we were aware that many residents were affected by Covid, whether through health issues, job and money worries, or feelings of loneliness and isolation. The service is flexible and responsive and no matter what the issue, the team will try and help.

Since the service was launched in June up until the end of 2020 we made over 200 calls to 23 residents. One gave some feedback on their weekly calls with George from the West Kent Together team:

“I want to say a massive thank you to George. He has been supporting me via the West Kent Together project with weekly telephone calls. George is never in a rush and listens to everything I have to say. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him; I was having suicidal thoughts at one point and he has helped me to have a more positive outlook on life and I thank him for everything he has done.”

To find out more:

Email: together@wkha.org.uk
Call: 0800 1970097

Fill in the website form:
www.westkent.org/together

Older people

We know that many of our older residents were affected by isolation and loneliness in 2020, as well as by the health concerns related to the Covid pandemic.

We introduced new services such as West Kent Together to help with this and residents themselves did so much to support each other and the wider community.

In 2020 West Kent has:

- Phoned residents for a friendly chat to check how they are
- Supported residents who are lonely or isolated
- Provided financial guidance on rent and benefits
- Supported residents with mental health issues

In 2020 residents in our over 55s schemes have joined in with:

- Garden concerts
- Socially distanced yoga
- Pet therapy
- Keep fit classes
- Dementia Friends sessions
- Socially distance summer bingo

They have also:

- Made Tik Tok videos
- Joined in with corridor quizzes
- Volunteered to be buddies
- Painted rainbows for the NHS
- Knitted hearts for hospital patients and their families
- Created messages of hope for hope trees
- Grown plants and vegetables



**WEST KENT
OWN AND/
OR MANAGE
7,893 HOMES,**
1,070 OF THOSE ARE
EXCLUSIVELY FOR
THE OVER 55s



Residents doing a TikTok video

Financial wellbeing services

The financial wellbeing team worked with 156 people who live in our affordable rented homes in 2020, helping them with balancing a household budget, giving advice on reducing utility bills and ensuring they can afford their new home.

- In 2020 we supported tenants to make 212 successful claims for Discretionary Housing Payments resulting in over £90,000 of extra housing support
- More than 1,500 of our residents claim Universal Credit for their housing costs. In 2020 we employed two new officers who now give dedicated support to all new claimants to make sure their housing costs are met. We have arranged a direct payment for over 400 of these because they were not paying on time and falling into arrears, or they were vulnerable.
- During the Covid pandemic we have worked closely with local foodbanks making over 100 referrals for households who have struggled financially or have needed food delivered due to isolating and shielding.
- We ran a successful campaign to encourage residents to talk to us if they were struggling financially.



Abacus furniture stores

Abacus stores provide low-cost furniture to those in need, divert good quality furniture from landfill and provide training & employment opportunities. Stores had to shut in March, but staff continued to work behind the scenes, providing essential furniture and furnishings for emergency accommodation and for those moving into temporary accommodation. A click and collect service was launched so that customers could still make purchases until stores were able to re-open.





Employment and training

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 usually delivered through local job hubs in Swanley, Sevenoaks and Maidstone but in 2020 we took our service offer online. We delivered virtual and online events such as pop up job events in partnership with Clarion Futures, Golding Vision and the Department of Work and Pensions.

We also offered individual support via email and phone. Redundancy support and advice for those on the furlough scheme was a core part of the team's work in 2020.

WE HELPED 343 PEOPLE
ATTEND JOB RELATED EVENTS

**WE SUPPORTED
28 PEOPLE
INTO WORK,**
EXCEEDING OUR
TARGET OF 25

**WE ESTABLISHED A
TABLET AND LAPTOP
LOAN SCHEME**
FOR OUR RESIDENTS WHO NEEDED TO
SEARCH AND APPLY FOR JOBS ONLINE.

Case study

Karl's journey into employment: "I didn't think I would be able to do this, but I did."

West Kent resident Karl had left his job with the hope of pursuing a new career, but Covid restrictions cut his job hunt short and he wasn't sure where to turn. After seeing a post about a free SIA security training course on the West Kent Facebook page, Karl contacted the employment and training team who supported him to apply for and complete the course. The course included a Covid-marshalling module which helped Karl secure a position at a testing centre.

“ I've gained a qualification and a whole new job market has opened up for me. I am currently working in a Covid testing centre, but when that ends, I feel confident now I have a new qualification and feel positive about looking for other work ”

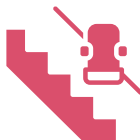
Plans for 2021



We will complete the regeneration of Queens Court, Edenbridge



We will build 287 new homes



We will start servicing stair lifts and through-floor lifts with no charge to residents

Our new scrutiny panel will complete two service area reviews, starting with a review of our training and employment service



We will review our customer data and cyber security to ensure we are keeping your data safe



We will introduce a new complaints policy to ensure complaints are dealt with effectively and efficiently



We will review our voids process so we can make sure residents are getting into new homes quicker

Contact us

To get involved and help improve our services email residentinvolvement@wkha.org or call 01732 749400

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

West Kent Housing Association
101 London Road, Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1AX

visit westkent.org
or call 01732 749400

@west_kent WestKentHA
 @westkenthousingassociation