



Residents' Annual Report 2021



WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Introduction



Now that we are emerging from the limitations of the pandemic, the West Kent team are keen to re-engage fully with our residents and communities.

At its first meeting of 2022 the Board decided to formally adopt the 'Together with Tenants' Charter, published by the National Housing Federation, of which we are a member. The Charter was developed jointly by Housing Associations and residents to show how relationships between tenants and landlords can be developed and strengthened. It is complementary to the Government's White Paper on Social Housing which was published towards the end of 2021.



In this report you will read about several initiatives which we are taking to bring to life our Charter commitments. Some are new ('Rant & Rave') and some are previous ideas in a new form (Scrutiny Panel). Taken together we want to ensure that the organisation is listening and learning from you, our customers, and is developing our services and operations in line with this feedback. This is inevitably a 'journey' – a long term process to evolve and improve the way in which West Kent works with you, but it can't succeed without your active input and participation.

I urge you to take the time to respond to resident surveys and questionnaires to make sure that we are getting as wide a range of views as possible.



You may not know that West Kent was set up from the start in 1989 with in-built resident involvement, in that we have always had Board Members who are also residents of West Kent homes. I would like to acknowledge the excellent contributions over the last year of our three resident Board Members Angela George, Megan Morvan and Ben Cooper who continue to play a valuable part in keeping the Board and West Kent focused on these core priorities.

I hope that you enjoy reading this report.

Colin Wilby
Chair - Board of Management

Resident Introduction

This annual report looks back at what has happened over the last year and how the views of residents have been heard and made a difference.

Residents want safe communities, healthy and green environments, sustainable neighbourhoods, easy access to services and to be able to maintain social links. They also want to have a greater say in influencing and shaping future services.

There are many opportunities to help West Kent shape their services and this review shows the difference that involvement has made – whether through consultations, reports, feedback, surveys, policies, or reviews. In addition, I sit on the Resident Scrutiny Panel. We meet regularly to look at how West Kent is performing on delivering services and identify where there may be opportunities to do things better. We have a full programme of reviews this year and would welcome input from more residents.

I, like many other residents am committed to being involved because I think it is an opportunity to make a positive difference to services for residents. If you are interested in being involved and would like to contribute to resident engagement, find out more by contacting West Kent.

Linda, Scrutiny Panel Member

Listening to you



Your views and experiences drive everything we do. In 2021, we continued to consult with you online due to the pandemic. Meanwhile, our resident scrutiny panel has also successfully carried out their first review on training and employment, giving us some invaluable recommendations on how to improve and better promote the service and support residents into work.

Five residents helped with our customer satisfaction tender, helping us to choose Rant & Rave to get regular customer feedback. We use Rant & Rave to ask residents what they thought of our service following contact with us, or for things such as repairs. We call back any low scores to find out what we can do to resolve any issues before they turn into bigger complaints.



Scrutiny panel reviews

One of the ways we listen to your views is through our resident scrutiny panel, working with our staff to review and suggest improvements to the services we provide. The panel looks at performance information, complaints data and satisfaction scores to work out which services need to be reviewed, so we can provide you with the best possible service.

The panel successfully conducted its first scrutiny review this year on the employment and training service. The team supports residents to find work; training courses; interview skills and CV writing; and guides residents on how to start their own business. The panel suggested several ways to improve the service, some of these include promoting the service more, better reporting on the impact the service has on residents and engaging more with young people.

In 2022 the panel will be completing three reviews:

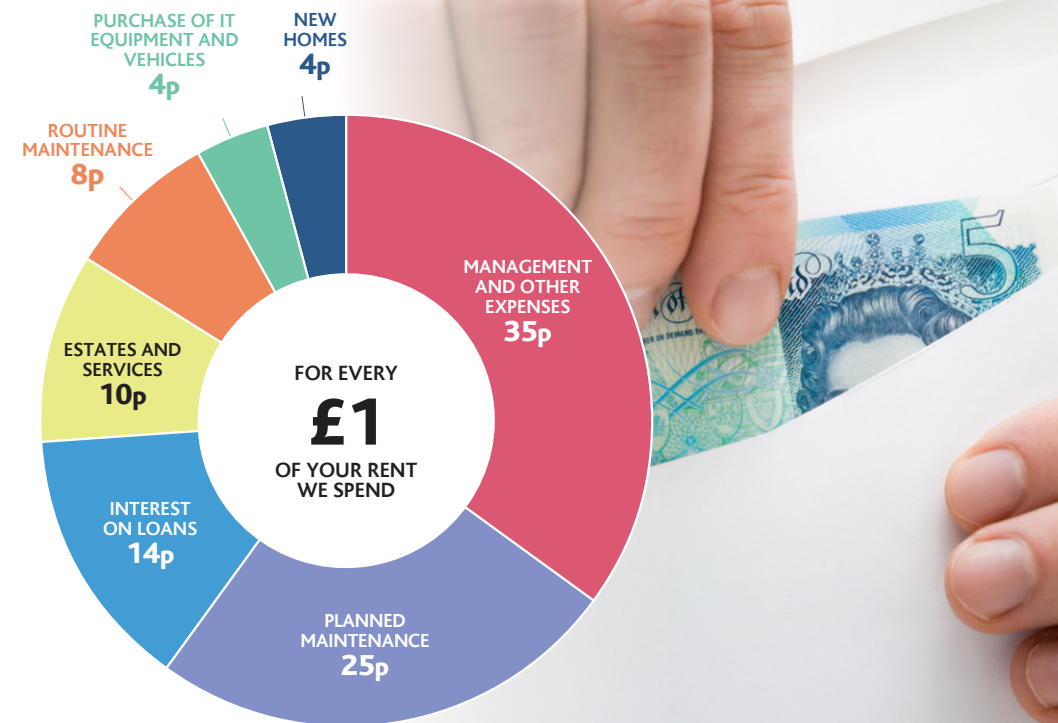
- Our repairs service (the time it takes and quality of repairs in your home)
- The resident voice (how we listen and act to residents' views)
- How we deal with empty homes (the quality of your home when you move in and how long it takes to re-let homes)

We currently have six members on the panel and we have room for more! Being on the panel is a great opportunity to really understand, influence and improve the way West Kent operates and it looks great on your CV too. For more information, email residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk

How your rent is spent

For every £1 we spend	2021 (pence)	2020 (pence)
MANAGEMENT AND OTHER EXPENSES (FOR EXAMPLE, STAFFING)	35	33
PLANNED MAINTENANCE	25	16
INTEREST ON LOANS (TO INVEST IN OUR EXISTING AND NEW HOMES)	14	14
ESTATES AND SERVICES	10	10
ROUTINE MAINTENANCE	8	6
PURCHASE OF IT EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES	4	2
NEW HOMES	4	19

Your 4p for new homes was then supplemented with a further 73p from bank loans, government grant and shared ownership sales income to build 185 new homes in 2021.



Collecting rent

We know money was a big concern for you in 2021, with many still facing the economic impact of the pandemic. Eight residents worked with us on an income campaign, encouraging you to speak to us if you were concerned about paying your rent or other bills. The campaign resulted in more residents receiving support and signposting, with missed payments (rent arrears) down to 1.98% (down from 2.07 in 2020).

Our results compared favourable to the average level of rent arrears of 2.6% across the south east.

Ten residents also gave their feedback on service charges. As a result we put in place better processes to calculate service charges to ensure they are good value for money and fair for everyone.

Average rents comparison 2021

Per week (48 week)	1 bed flat	3 bed house
Social rent	£94.81	£128.53
Affordable rent	£126.21	£179.14
Market rent (what you'd pay if you were privately renting)	£157.77	£223.93

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

Where are our homes?



At the end of December 2021 West Kent owned and managed 8,129 homes across Kent.

	2021
Rented	75.96%
Rented – older people	14.17%
Shared ownership	9.85%



At the end of 2021 we had **262** homes in construction.

We sold **100** shared ownership (part buy, part rent) homes, compared with 112 in 2020. We raised **£12.67m** through sales income. This helps us fund new homes and keep rents affordable.



We completed **17** staircasing transactions (where a shared owner buys more towards their home) which generated **£2.78m** of income.

Keeping you and your neighbourhoods safe

As you'll have seen earlier in the report, we've increased the amount of money we spend in this to 25p per £1 to make sure we're keeping you safe in your home and your community.

As well as keeping you as safe as possible, many of the below are legal requirements, so please do let us in to your home when we contact you.

Fire

- We carry out regular checks of communal parts of our blocks of flats called fire risk assessments.
- We carried out 276 fire risk assessments in 2021.

Asbestos

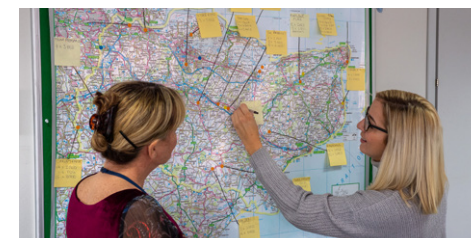
- We regularly check the condition of the known asbestos – containing materials and will remove them if they become a risk.

Legionella

- We have carried out risk assessments for all the water services in homes where we are required to. External specialist consultants carry out an annual inspection where there is a high 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 6,463 gas safety checks.



Anti-social behaviour

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 anti-social behaviour, which have increased as a result of the pandemic. The table below compares 2021 with the year before.

NOISE		HARASSMENT / THREATENING BEHAVIOUR / INTIMIDATION		DRUGS	
2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
202	153	111	133	164	47

LITTER		PETS / ANIMAL NUISANCE		ACCESS	
2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
58	50	58	44	2	1

We would always encourage you to talk to your neighbour first and let them know how their behaviour is affecting you – they may not realise they are causing a nuisance. If talking to them does not resolve the issue, let us know. You can report anti-social behaviour in several ways:

- **Using our website form at www.westkent.org/asb**
- **Calling 0800 169 1122**
- **Emailing help@wkha.org.uk**

We'll ask you to fill out diary sheets to tell us what's happening, as we need this to take action.

Remember, if someone is committing a crime, please call the police on 101 (or 999 if it's an emergency or someone is in danger). We work with the police and local authorities where appropriate to tackle anti-social behaviour.



Domestic abuse

We received 73 reports of domestic abuse in 2021, up from 47 in 2020. We have been working hard to tackle this urgent problem, something that has sadly only got worse across the country because of the pandemic.

We worked with 13 residents to co-create a new domestic abuse policy and procedure, meaning we can support and signpost residents as safely and quickly as possible. We have trained all of our staff that visit residents or their homes to spot signs of abuse and what to do and have introduced a dedicated area of our website with guidance about domestic abuse and a

confidential form to report concerns. Visit www.westkent.org/da for more about this.

We can offer help and support to anyone affected by domestic abuse. We will deal with all reports sensitively and safely and can offer referrals to specialist organisations.

We are also working towards a DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation - the benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, we can help.

Complaints

Five residents gave their feedback on our complaints leaflet which outlined the new process, and we have introduced a dedicated area of our website, making it easier for people to make a complaint. Visit www.westkent.org/complaint

We want you to let us know when we haven't got things right, so we can learn from both individual complaints and monitor any trends to see where things are going wrong. This has meant that we've had an increase in complaints (up from 407 in 2020), as we encourage you tell us when and how we can do better.

You also told us that you wanted West Kent to have one team focused on dealing with complaints, so we have a brand-new customer resolution team responsible for managing and responding to formal complaints.

Reasons for complaints:

Most of our complaints are about:



Repairs - 195 complaints received, mostly about the length of time to complete and the quality of the work.



Staff - 49 complaints received, mostly about how we deal with anti-social behaviour.



Housing and estate management - 27 complaints received, mostly about staff timeliness.

Last year we received:

585
compliments 

503
complaints 

Of these

325 were formal stage one, of which we agreed with 186.

72 were formal stage two, of which we agreed with 36.

Housing Ombudsman

We had **two** complaints investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service in 2021 and we were found as having **no maladministration in both cases**.

Your feedback

29 residents contributed to our customer experience strategy, which sets out how we will deliver excellent services in a friendly, solution-focused way, and how we will ensure residents feel valued, respected and listened to and can have their say in the decisions we make.

104 residents responded to our resident satisfaction survey, giving us a good insight into how residents feel about our services; what we do well, and how we can improve.

Maintaining your home

We've shown here, the numbers of home improvements we made, how many we completed in 2021, and our targets for 2022. We know that maintaining your home is one of the most important things to our residents, so are making this a key priority.

Many of our services were still affected by Covid restrictions, and we needed to make sure all work was carried out safely, in line with government guidelines, so this has inevitably affected our performance. But you can see that we've worked really hard to increase our planned maintenance in 2021.



Abacus furniture stores

Replacement	Completed in 2021	2020	Target 2022
Bathroom	123	58	220
Boiler	366	281	361
Doors	113	78	191
Kitchen	35	20	10
Air source heating	17	39	127
Electric heating	10	6	12
Roofs	25	12	59



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.



In 2021 we spent **£18.3m** on all maintenance.

Abacus provides low-cost, reuse furniture to those in need, diverts good quality furniture from landfill and provides training and employment opportunities.

Abacus was closed for a little while at the start of 2021, but staff continued to work behind the scenes, providing essential furniture and furnishings for emergency accommodation and for those moving into temporary accommodation.

We have continued our click and collect service, so customers can still make purchases online and arrange a collection or delivery to their home.



IN 2021, WE DIRECTED
61,000 TONNES
OF FURNITURE AWAY FROM LANDFILL

Contractors



We have several contractors that we employ to complete specific areas of work. Here is an overview of this work.

Two residents sit on our core group for contractor standards, helping our contractors to understand how they are performing from a resident-perspective to provide better and more cost-effective services.

BRENWARDS

Building and electrical

In 2021, Brenwards completed 96.9% of their 24,492 jobs on target and spent £12.8m.

BRIDGLANDS

Grounds maintenance

In 2021, Bridglands completed 90.14% of their 1,217 jobs on target and spent £686,733.

IAN WILLIAMS

External painting and decorating

In 2021, Ian Williams completed 68% of their 933 jobs on target and spent £997,639.

INHOMES

Gas and plumbing

In 2021, iNHomes completed 96.4% of their 21,838 jobs on target and spent £2.8m.

MILA

UPVC windows and door repairs and replacements

In 2021, Mila completed 75.3% of their 2,524 jobs on target and spent £592,190.

Wellbeing and support

West Kent isn't just a landlord. We also provide a range of support services to help and support people with anything from money worries to mental health and wellbeing or housing concerns.

Our financial wellbeing team worked with 184 people, helping them with their household budget, giving advice on reducing utility bills and ensuring they can pay the rent.

More than 2,000 of our residents claim Universal Credit for their housing costs. We give dedicated support to all new claimants to make sure their housing costs are met and have arranged a direct payment for over 500 of these because they were not paying on time and falling into arrears, or they were vulnerable.

In the autumn we ran a successful campaign encouraging you to talk to us if you were affected by the reduction of Universal Credit or the ending of the Furlough scheme.

We continue to work closely with local foodbanks making over 150 referrals in 2021 for households who

have struggled financially or needed food delivered due to isolating and shielding. **We also helped over 50 households with energy vouchers** as part of a campaign to help those in fuel poverty.

Our tenancy support team worked with 192 people, supporting them to live successfully in their home.

Our social support and supported living team provided 4,744 hours' worth of support. The team provides support with anything; from helping clients to attend appointments to supporting people at risk of suicide. The support can be intensive and long term, but the impact is significant as it enables clients to remain independent.

Our adaptations team supported 160 families to get much needed disabled adaptations for their home.

Our communities team **worked with Compaid to support 11 people** to get online.



Linda Hogan Community Fund

The Linda Hogan Community Fund provides grants of up to £500 to charities and community organisations across Kent to support activities for groups of all ages and backgrounds. In some cases, the grants pay for the full cost of the project, but many contribute to larger initiatives, helping these organisations to run more ambitious activities and reach more people.

Two residents sit on the panel to decide which groups should receive funding. In 2021, we funded 51 groups with a total of £15,000.



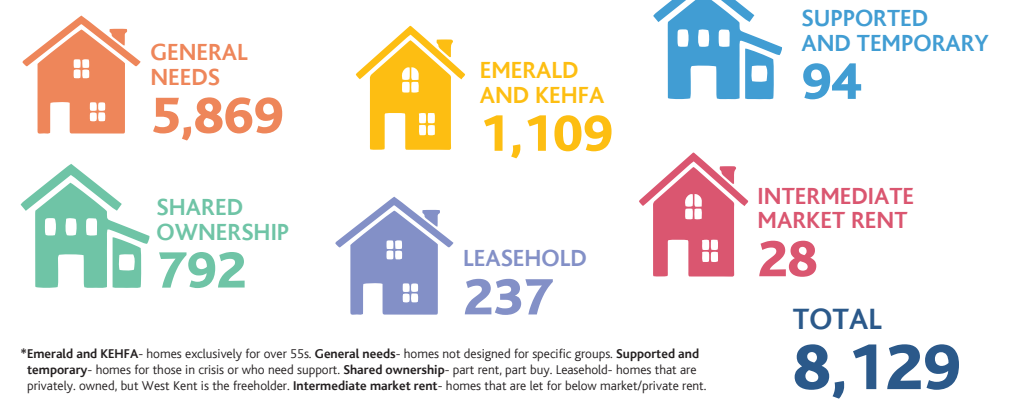
Letting our homes

In 2021, we let 621 homes, up from 549 in 2020. The average time to let a home to a new resident was 40 days, our target is 32 days.

We reviewed our housing options policy, and 14 residents were involved in this. The policy sets out how we allocate new homes and manage our existing tenancies. Six residents also fed back on our empty homes process, letting us know their experiences when moving in so we can improve this and provide extra support to those who need it.

In 2022, our resident scrutiny panel will be reviewing the voids (empty homes) process. If you'd like to be a part of this, please email residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk or call **01732 749400**.

The homes we manage



*Emerald and KEHFA- homes exclusively for over 55s. General needs- homes not designed for specific groups. Supported and temporary- homes for those in crisis or who need support. Shared ownership- part rent, part buy. Leasehold- homes that are privately owned, but West Kent is the freeholder. Intermediate market rent- homes that are let for below market/private rent.



Building our communities

We're proud to be more than just a landlord. We want to support our residents and the communities they live in. We want to create and maintain safe, strong neighbourhoods by listening to local people and delivering activities that make a difference to our communities. This has been especially important throughout the pandemic, where we have continued to provide community and support services digitally to be there for our residents at a time when they need it the most.

Older people

We own and manage 1,109 homes all over Kent, that are exclusively for those aged over 55 and over.

We know the importance of a good quality home and a strong support network as our residents get older. Our over 55 homes offer choice and flexible services as well as a wide range of activities across three housing options:

- Independent living - a flat within a friendly community environment, and in some locations access to communal facilities like a communal lounge, kitchen and laundry room.
- Sheltered housing - independent living within a scheme environment with support so residents can live independently for as long as possible. These schemes benefit from communal facilities such as a laundry room, lounge, kitchen and garden – some also have a guest room.
- Extra care - the next step up from sheltered housing, providing accommodation for people aged 55 and over who might need a bit more support, but want to remain living independently. There is the added benefit of care staff being on site 24 hours a day and the schemes have restaurants and hairdressers.

Most schemes have a buzzing activity programme too. Scheme managers or residents (in some schemes) organise regular activities such as coffee mornings, bingo, games, crafts and wellbeing group activities.

This year we opened Repton Court; a brand new over 55 scheme close to Ashford town centre. The state-of-the-art scheme is made up of 40 one and two-bedroom apartments, with access to additional support if needed.

Young people

West Kent delivers a wide range of youth services and activities focused mainly in the Sevenoaks district. Activities include arts and crafts, sports, formal training and skills development.

In a year where we still had Covid restricting our ability to meet with young people in person, we delivered lots of activities online. When we were able to, we invited young people back to our youth clubs and face to face sessions.

Our outcomes in 2021:



396 ONLINE SESSIONS,
INCLUDING HOMEWORK CLUB, COOKING AND ONLINE GAMING (DUE TO LOCKDOWN)




1,208 ATTENDANCES
AT DETACHED YOUTH WORK ACROSS SEVENOAKS



1,411 ATTENDANCES
AT OUR 8-12S YOUNG ADVENTURERS CLUBS



803 BOXING SESSIONS

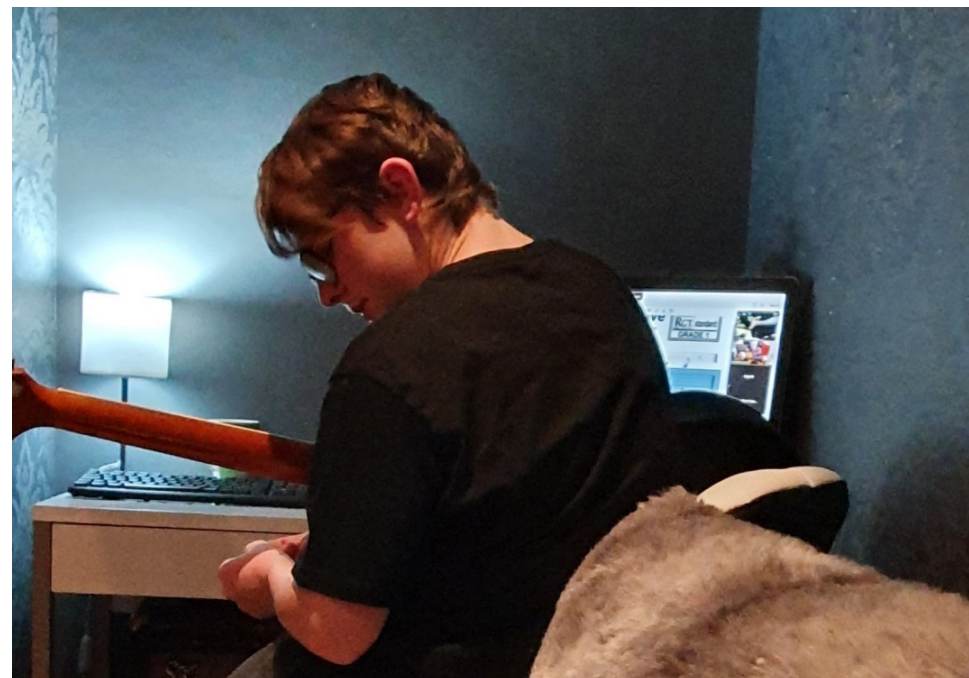


1,653 HOUSE (11-19 CLUB) ATTENDANCES



2,677 PUPILS TOOK PART
IN SESSIONS WITHIN SCHOOLS

To find out more, visit westkent.org/youth or call 01732 749420.





Employment and training

We offer support to those looking to start work for the first time, return to work and those wanting to get better paid work.

The range of services covers CV writing, interview skills, self-employment support, internet job search and online applications. We also offer help with finding apprenticeships, careers advice and deliver a range of training courses.

In 2021 we continued to support residents online. We secured additional lottery funding and a grant from Sevenoaks District Council to help us deliver more services into West Kent for those on furlough. We delivered a range of courses including a security training course, self-employment workshops and social media job hunting.

WE HELPED

75 PEOPLE

TO FIND WORK

130 PEOPLE

ATTENDED ONE OF OUR JOB FAIRS

398 PEOPLE

WERE REFERRED TO THE TEAM

62 PEOPLE

ATTENDED ONE OF OUR TRAINING EVENTS

Plans for 2022

We want to provide you with meaningful support and a home that is safe and warm. To do this, we need to hear from you. In 2022, we will:



Act on the results of the Survey of Tenants and Residents, so we can improve our services based on your feedback.



Improve our internal IT systems to make it easier for you to contact us, giving you the best possible customer service.



Deliver a new approach to community development, starting with a pilot in Swanley.



Work with you to hear the resident voice, and act on what you tell us.



Change the way we carry out repairs and replacements in residents homes.





Contact us

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

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 team: communicationsteam@wkha.org.uk

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visit westkent.org
or call 01732 749400

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*'Housing sector average' refers to the HouseMark year end scorecard - we benchmark ourselves against housing providers who are similar in terms of size and geography. A number of photographs used in this report were taken before Covid restrictions were in place.