

October 2023

# TENANT NEWS

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**RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT PANEL  
APPROVED** 

# OUR ANNUAL REPORT

This is a summary of our performance over the last year. If you'd like a copy of the full annual report, please contact Lizzie and Victoria at [getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk) or on **07597 528 428** to ask for a copy to be sent to you.

## HOME

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Home Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to provide you with a good quality home and to offer value for money with our repairs and maintenance service.

### This year, we've:



**Spent £3 million**  
on day-to-day repairs to your homes

**Completed 10,436**  
on day-to-day repairs to your homes



**Completed 1,796**  
heating repairs



- replaced seven kitchens
- replaced 15 bathrooms
- replaced the outside doors on 109 homes
- replaced the windows in 65 homes
- replaced four roofs
- installed four wet rooms

## HOW ARE WE DOING

	OUR TARGET	LAST YEAR'S RESULTS	THIS YEAR
Routine day-to-day repairs completed on time	98%	98.24%	92.86%
Day-to-day repair appointments kept	96%	95.15%	97.85%
Routine heating repairs completed on time	98%	94.42%	99.11%
Heating repair appointments kept	95%	99.92%	99.08%

## WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

We're working on the contract for our repairs service. This includes working with officers, tenants and councillors on the new wording of the repairs contract to make sure we are providing the best service possible to our tenants.

## TENANCY

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Tenancy Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to let our homes fairly, transparently and efficiently.

## HOW ARE WE DOING

	OUR TARGET	LAST YEAR'S RESULTS	THIS YEAR
Average days to relet empty homes	16.5 days	29.93 days	42.39 days

## WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

We know this is a problem and are working to try and resolve it.

There are weekly meetings with council officers to discuss voids and how to get them back into use. We have carried out work to identify where the delays are happening and are working with teams to fix this. We're also working on

a new tenancy policy to try and solve the problem of hard-to-let properties. These are homes where our own policies restrict us from letting out the home, such as two bedroom flats and some studio flats in Independent Living Schemes.

On 1 April 2023 there were 1,837 households on the Housing Need Register ("waiting list") wanting a council home.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to keep your estates and communal areas clean and safe, as well as working with others to promote wellbeing and to deal with anti-social behaviour.

### This year, we've:

**Closed 60**  
sustainment cases



**Carried out nine**  
assisted moves



**Closed 117**  
child protection cases



**Cleared 19**  
gardens through our  
community payback  
garden scheme



Our anti-social behaviour officers respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance. They work closely with other organisations like Kent Police, Kent Fire

and Rescue Service, Kent County Council Social Services and our own Community Safety team to try to resolve complaints from tenants about nuisance behaviour.

## TENANT ENGAGEMENT

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to give you the information you need, to set out a clear approach to dealing with complaints and to give you a wide range of ways you can get involved and influence the housing service.

### This year, we've:

**Held five separate meetings**  
with our communications  
REP sub group



**Held 8 meetings**  
with the Resident Engagement Panel



**Held four**  
Independent  
Living Forum  
meetings



**Held eight**  
Community  
Champion estate  
inspections



**Received 16**  
garden  
competition  
entries



**Sent out four  
newsletters**

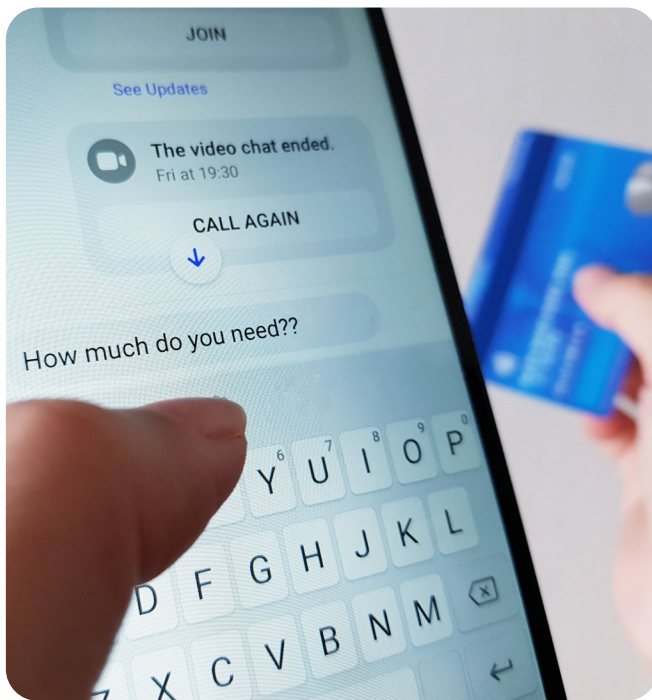
## HOW ARE WE DOING

	OUR TARGET	LAST YEAR'S RESULTS	THIS YEAR
Number of involved tenants and leaseholders	32	53	57
Residents satisfied the council listens to and acts on their views	50%	42.3%	
Residents who feel well informed about things that affect them	61%	64.2%	

## WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

Over the last year we've made great improvements including getting more tenants involved in our Resident Engagement Panel and launching our Community Champion estate visits. We have lots of improvements to make when it comes to tenant engagement including

setting up our Disability Forum and improving the way we communicate with the wider tenant audience online. We also have a focus on real change, improving the way tenants are treated and closely working with tenants to find out what you want from your housing service.



# STOP, ASK, MAKE SURE

Scams may be happening in your area - please be aware.

### Something may be a scam if:

- it seems too good to be true
- someone you don't know contacts or visits you unexpectedly
- you are being urged to respond to something quickly
- you've been asked to pay in an unusual way
- you've been asked to give away personal information

### STOP

Stop the person from entering your home and check they have an appointment. All of our contractors will carry a valid ID.

### ASK

Check their ID, ask what work they'll be doing and where they are from

### MAKE SURE

If you are unsure, please confirm with your Independent Living Manager if you live in sheltered housing or call the council on **01227 862 142**.

**The council or any of its contractors will NEVER ask for cash or personal information. Please refuse entry to anyone if you are still unsure.**

## Let us know if a property is vacant

Recently we've had a number of tenants moving out or who have had relatives that have died and they haven't ended their tenancy. This leaves valuable homes empty which could be used by other families.

If you are moving out of your council house, you need to give us notice as soon as possible. You can find all of the information on how to end a tenancy on our website [canterbury.gov.uk/endtenancy](http://canterbury.gov.uk/endtenancy).

Please also let us know if you believe a neighbour is not living in their home full time. This is a breach of the tenancy agreement and the home could be used by someone else.

You can report these issues or ask us any questions by calling us on **01227 862142** or email [neighbourhoodmanagement@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodmanagement@canterbury.gov.uk)

## Putting safety first

We recently reviewed our process for completing gas and electrical safety checks. We noticed that there's a lot of tenants not allowing us access into their homes to complete these important checks.

A significant change has been made which allows us to approach the courts to get legal permission to enter the properties for gas safety checks.

This may sound scary, but it's important. Our first priority is to make sure everyone is safe. There may be reasons why tenants aren't allowing us into their homes and we have dedicated officers to work with those tenants to support them.

Since having this policy in place, our contractor has been working with tenants and has been able to gain access to all properties without needing to go to the courts.

Please remember, all Canterbury City Council officers and contractors will have valid ID. Appointments will be made in advance of the safety checks. **We will not turn up unannounced and we will also never ask for cash.**

# Benefits and money advice

We understand the cost of living is a concern for everyone and want to make it as easy as possible to keep on top of your finances and to know where to get help if needed.

## Here are some things that you need to do:

- if you claim Universal Credit, remember to update the Department of Work and Pensions of your 2024/2025 housing costs on but not before 1 April 2024. You will be notified of your new rent amount in March 2024
- keep us updated with your contact details - this is very important for us to be able to help you. You can do this by emailing [generaltenancyenquiries@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:generaltenancyenquiries@canterbury.gov.uk) or call **01227 862142**
- your rent is due in advance, if you claim Universal Credit and ask for an 'advance payment' you must use the proportion awarded for housing costs to pay your rent. Please make sure you do this to avoid getting into arrears

As you know, we charge rent every Monday. Next year there are 53 Mondays in the financial year from April 2024 to March 2025.

There will likely be the usual two rent-free weeks in December 2024.

However, this Universal Credit will likely only cover all but one of the paid weeks as was the case last time there were 53 Mondays in a rent year.

For those who receive the full amount of help with housing costs from Universal Credit for the next rent year, there will be one week's worth of rent that will have to be made up from your other income.

If you are struggling with any payments, please do let us know as soon as possible. We have expert advisors that can help you, as well as links with charities.

You can contact us by emailing [generaltenancyenquiries@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:generaltenancyenquiries@canterbury.gov.uk) or call **01227 862142**

# New repairs contract

Our teams are currently working hard in the background to make important changes to our responsive repairs contract. The contract is coming to an end and we'll shortly start the process to renew. We'll be advertising for companies to bid for the new contract.

We'll review the bids, carry out interviews and offer the contract to the successful bidder.

The new contract will start on 1 April 2024, a further update will be given nearer the time.

We are working closely with the Resident Engagement Panel to ensure tenants are at the heart of every change and decision made.

If you have any questions about this, please contact Lizzie Norcott, Policy Officer (Engagement) on **07597 528 428**.



## APPLY FOR A HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND PAYMENT

Government fund to help low-income households with food, bills, replacement boilers and white goods and other essentials



### TO APPLY YOU MUST BE:

- a Canterbury district resident
- 16 or over
- a low income household of £30,000 or less

Find out more [canterbury.gov.uk/householdsupportfund](https://canterbury.gov.uk/householdsupportfund)



# Independent Living



### Safety

Your safety is our top priority. As you know, we've had waking watch night staff in our schemes after learning that many of the fire detectors in flats were not linked to the warden call system.

Work will be finishing in the next few weeks so we can start to remove the waking watches. They have already been removed from a lot of schemes. While this work has been necessary to ensure the safety of every tenant, we wanted to thank you for your patience while we worked through this project.

### Role of Independent Living Managers

Our Independent Living Team is made up of 10 full time Independent Living Managers managing 24 schemes across the district. Usually an Independent Living Manager manages more than one scheme.

This means they won't always be at your scheme. However, they will always be contactable during working hours on the phone and will run regular surgeries to speak with tenants. If your Independent Living Manager is not available, other members of the team will be happy to help you.

We have an open-door policy. If your Independent Living Manager is in the office, the door will be open to chat, unless they are in a meeting.

### Be kind to your neighbours

Our Independent Living schemes are made up of close communities which is great for making friends, but also sometimes comes with its problems as you can't like everyone.

Please do remember the communal areas are for everyone to enjoy as part of their home. If you see someone you don't like, either avoid them or be polite and walk by. If problems continue, contact your Independent Living Manager.

# Resident Engagement Panel

We've been working hard in the background on very important topics that will affect all tenants and we always have tenants at the heart of everything we do.

### We have:

- received a presentation on the new responsive repairs contract and contributed to social values within the contract
- nominated one tenant representative to sit on the interview panel for new contractors
- appointed an Energy Efficiency Champion
- reviewed the annual report, making important changes to the design

We will be hosting four events which will be a chance for residents to meet people from Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent County Council and to also give feedback on the housing service you receive, including a chance to win a £50 shopping voucher!

- **Seasalter Christian Centre, Whitstable** - Wednesday 24 January 2pm to 6pm
- **Herne Bay Baptist Church, Herne Bay** - Wednesday 7 February 2pm to 6pm
- **Thanington Community Centre, Canterbury** - Tuesday 27 February 2pm to 6pm
- **Prince of Wales Youth Centre, Canterbury** - Wednesday 20 March 2pm to 6pm

All tenants will directly receive information on events that are happening near them.

If you have any feedback for the Resident Engagement Panel, or have important topics you think we should be aware of, please do get in touch by emailing [getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk).

**You'll have received our annual Tenant Survey this year, thank you for giving us your feedback.**

We'll be sharing the results of this on our website [canterbury.gov.uk/tenantsurvey](http://canterbury.gov.uk/tenantsurvey). Keep your eyes peeled and if you have any queries please contact Lizzie Norcott, Policy Officer (Engagement) on **07597 528 428** or [getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk).



# Celebrating this year's garden competition winners



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Thank you to the Resident Engagement Panel for arranging another wonderful garden competition. It's great to see so many tenants enter the competition in all categories. We loved visiting your gardens!

The awards ceremony took place on 15 August at Tower House in Westgate Gardens, Canterbury. We were lucky with the weather and had a brilliant turn out by tenants, staff and contractors.

The ceremony was attended by the prize winners, Resident Engagement Panel members, the Lord Mayor of Canterbury Cllr Jean Butcher and Lady Mayoress Diane Baldock, along with a number of Canterbury City Council councillors and staff plus representatives from our contractors Mears, Town and Country Cleaners, Swale Heating and the council's waste and grounds maintenance contractor Canenco.

## Huge congratulations to:

### Front garden:

- 1. **Winner:** Martin Ashdown (Chartham)
- 5. **Highly commended:** Alison Dormer (Canterbury)

### Back garden:

- 2. **Winner:** Dawn Brazier (Wincheap)
- 6. **Highly commended:** Gillian Matthews (Hersden)

### Communal gardens:

- 3. **Winner:** Shalmsford Court (Chartham)
- 7. **Highly commended:** Kenny Ball (Greenhill)

### Containers, pots and baskets:

- 4. **Winner:** Lydia Luckhurst (Chartham)
- 8. **Runner up:** Peter Kay (Canterbury)

All winners received **£70** in gift vouchers and a plant. Everyone who was highly commended received **£60** in gift vouchers and a plant.

A very big thank you to our sponsors for making these prizes possible: **Canterbury Environment Company (Canenco), Swale Heating, Grovewell Garden Centre (Canterbury), Mears, VPro Solutions and Town and Country Cleaners.**

# Reporting repairs and maintenance

We work with different types of contractors to do jobs on our behalf:

## Household repairs

If you have a general repair within your home, or need to report communal cleaning issues, please contact Mears by calling **0800 313 4740**.

## Gas, hot water or heating repairs

If you have a problem with your heating or plumbing:

- If your home has its own boiler, please contact Swale Heating by calling freephone **0800 987 4033**
- If you live in a block with a communal boiler, please contact Thermoserv by calling **0208 681 7330** (option 2)

## Grounds maintenance

If you need to report any issues with grass cutting or general grounds maintenance please contact Canenco on **01227 947 860**.

## Waste

If you need to report a missed bin, please visit [canterbury.gov.uk/missedbin](https://canterbury.gov.uk/missedbin). You can also find out your bin collection dates on this page. If you'd like to purchase a new bin, including a green bin, please visit [canterbury.gov.uk/newbin](https://canterbury.gov.uk/newbin).

You can also call Canenco on **01227 947 860** for any help and support.



# Have your say on council consultations

All the consultations we run are available at [canterbury.gov.uk/consultations](https://canterbury.gov.uk/consultations) while they are active. You can also sign up for email notifications at [news.canterbury.gov.uk](https://news.canterbury.gov.uk) or by emailing [consultations@canterbury.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@canterbury.gov.uk).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

