

**April 2025**

# **Tenant and Leaseholder Newsletter**

Inside this April issue:

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- Mears apprenticeships
- Join us on a Neighbourhood Inspection
- Home aids and adaptations
- Electrical safety in your home

## **Mears secures new ten-year contract with Thanet District Council**

We have awarded Mears a new ten-year contract to deliver repairs, empty homes, planned works, compliance works and works under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, at the homes that we own.

The contract starts on Tuesday 1 April 2025. It means that Mears will continue to carry out repairs, as they do now. There will be some improvements to the service too.

The way that you report repairs won't change. Please contact Mears using the same methods as before.

### **What's new?**

- **Local service:** Mears has a local team that includes operatives and subcontractors for specialist works. Subcontractors will work closely with Mears employees and will all have Mears ID badges.
- **Better communication:** Residents receive a text message to confirm appointments, which includes a link to find out more about your appointment, add photos and any other important information.
- **Support:** Mears will provide a Resident Liaison Officer to make sure you have the support you need.
- **Other improvements:** Mears will tell you about local job vacancies and has a suite of DIY videos available on the Mears website to help you undertake simple repairs yourself. We'll send

out surveys where you can tell us how you feel about Mears' service.

## **Resident Involvement and Mears' Commitment**

Our resident group helped to make sure we chose the best contractor.

### **The Residents Group said:**

"Having a good repair and maintenance service is very important to us. We made sure our voices were heard - we suggested improvements and took part in the selection process. We focused on improving the service from Mears' subcontractors."

### **Mears' Commitment**

Mears is very pleased they have been awarded the new contract. The team said:

"We're delighted to have been reappointed as the council's repairs and maintenance contractor. We have always understood the importance of taking care of you and providing clear communication whilst we help improve your home. We look forward to continuing to build on our existing relationships and delivering high quality results."

## **Mears provide opportunities to become an apprentice**

They are looking for the following apprentices to start in 2025:

- Electrician
- Roofer
- Painter/decorator
- Office admins

If you're interested in an apprenticeship at Mears please email [thanet.repairs@Mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:thanet.repairs@Mearsgroup.co.uk). The Mears team is happy to answer your questions.

If you become a Mears apprentice, you will:

- Get full guidance and support
- Learn from experienced teams
- Develop your skills

- Become an important part of the team
- Earn while you learn

Save our new phone number to your phone or add it to your phone book.  
You can also contact us by emailing [myhome@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:myhome@thanet.gov.uk)

## **Mears' Big Clean Up day**

Our contractors work hard to make sure your homes and communal spaces are safe and well maintained.

As part of Mears' contract they provide a 'social value' service to help improve the local area. This is part of their ongoing commitment to making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.

The team recently came together to enjoy a productive day at Chatham and Belmont Court. They improved accessibility to communal spaces, by removing weeds and making sure paths were clear of debris.

## **Join us on your neighbourhood inspection**

Join us on your neighbourhood inspection and help us check on things like communal cleaning, repairs, grounds maintenance and identify improvements.

If your area is not on the list and you would like to join an inspection, please let us know by calling **01843 577575** or email [residentinvolvement@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@thanet.gov.uk)

Below is a list inspection dates, times, areas covered and meeting points:

Tuesday 3 June at 10am  
Elham and Biddenden Close, Margate  
Front of Flats 26-34 Elham Close

Tuesday 10 June at 10am  
Trove Court and Kennedy House, Ramsgate  
Outside Kennedy House

Tuesday 17 June at 10am  
Clements Road, Ramsgate  
Outside Block with 117 - 139

Thursday 19 June at 10am  
Rosedale and College Road, Margate  
Front of flats  
94 College Road

Tuesday 24 June at 10am  
Highfield Court, Ramsgate  
Outside flats along Highfield Rd

Wednesday 9 July at 10am  
Dane Valley Road, William Avenue and Tomlin Drive, Margate  
Outside 24/26 William Avenue

Wednesday 16 July at 10am  
Invicta House and Appledore Close, Margate  
Invicta House car park

Tuesday 22 July at 10am  
Churchfields and High Street, Margate  
Car park near 147-151 High Street

Tuesday 29 July at 10am  
Holton Close and Stringer Drive, Margate  
Outside 1 Holton Close

\*Dates may be subject to change.

Visit [thanet.gov.uk/get-involved](https://thanet.gov.uk/get-involved) to see the full list of Estate Inspections in 2025.

# **Our Estate Standard**

The Estate Standard sets out our commitment to maintaining communal areas in and around our blocks of flats.

## **Communal Cleaning**

Our cleaning contractor, Town and Country, provides services to meet these standards:

Weekly tasks:

- Sweep and wash internal communal floors.
- Clean windows in entrances and lobbies.
- Wipe skirting boards, bannisters, and windows; remove cobwebs.
- Clean lift doors, floors, and mirrors.
- Sweep and clear litter and weeds from the main entrance path.

Every three Months:

- Clean communal window glazing where possible.

Twice a year:

- Clean and disinfect communal bins and bin chutes

## **External Communal Areas**

We clear entrance paths of litter and weeds, remove dumped rubbish, and handle hazardous waste.

## **Communal Ground Maintenance**

- Grass areas are cut from March to October, with cuttings left on site.
- Paved areas are treated with weed killer twice yearly.
- Hedges and shrubs are maintained twice yearly (November to March).

We ensure communal repairs are made, enforce zero tolerance for items stored in communal areas, and remove graffiti promptly.

## **What we need you to do**

Residents share the responsibility for keeping the estate standard. Please:

- Give access for health and safety checks.
- Dispose of rubbish properly.
- Avoid littering and fly-tipping.
- Clean up after pets.
- Keep communal areas clear of personal items.
- Don't park SORN vehicles in resident parking areas.

For full details, visit [Thanet.gov.uk/Policies-and-Reports](https://Thanet.gov.uk/Policies-and-Reports).

## Home aids and adaptations

If you're struggling with mobility and using your home, we may be able to provide aids and adaptations.

These can include small items, like grab rails and bannisters, or larger items like stairlifts, flush floor showers or ramps.

We work with Kent County Council (KCC) Social Services to enable our tenants to live independently. To make any adaptations to your home, you will need an assessment from an occupational therapist (OT).

We can't carry out adaptations without an OT assessment.

### How to get a care needs assessment

The care needs assessment looks at how your needs impact on your wellbeing and daily life. KCC will assess your care and support needs with you, and decide if you need support.

To find out more visit [KCC Care Needs Assessment](#) or call **03000 416161**.

If the assessment shows you need support, the OT will share their recommendations with us. We will need to make sure your home is suitable for the adaptations that are recommended.

**Want to learn more about aids and adaptations?** Read our frequently asked questions on our [Aids and Adaptations webpage](#).

### A resident's experience

We heard from one of our residents who shared their experience of having their home adapted to suit their needs.

This resident had a flush floor shower, stair lift and grab rails added to their home, to help with mobility.

### **How was the whole process for you?**

“The whole process was very smooth! I had been struggling with mobility for a while. Finding it hard to use the stairs, using the shower and getting around the house. I explained this to my doctor and they referred me to the occupational therapist (OT). They both came round to assess my mobility and to see what support I needed.”

“I then got a visit from Mears to discuss what adaptations had been recommended for my home. I even got to choose from a range of colours and tiles for my adapted bathroom.”

### **Have you found your adaptation beneficial to your everyday life?**

“Absolutely! It has really improved how I use my home and I am much happier to be able to get around.”

### **How was your experience with the Mears operatives?**

“The whole Mears team did a great job. They were professional and provided good service.”

### **What advice would you give to anyone struggling with getting around their home?**

“I would recommend contacting your doctor or an OT to help. The service I received was great and I am happy with the outcome.”

## **Electrical ‘white goods’ safety**

‘White goods’ is a general term for large household appliances. Such as fridge freezers, washing machines and dishwashers.

In England last year, **1,140 accidental electrical fires** involved common household white goods. These include items such as tumble dryers and washing machines. Equal to **three** fires per day.

When using white goods:

- make sure washing machines, tumble dryers and dishwashers are not used overnight. Or left operating unattended.
- remember to clean lint filters weekly, to reduce the risk of fire.

## **How to check if your appliances are safe?**

It's important to make sure any old or second hand white goods are still safe to use. Especially second hand appliances that you may buy online. For example from Facebook Marketplace or Ebay.

Some appliances may have a safety recall, which means they should be returned due to a safety defect.

Here are a few ways to check if your appliances are safe:

- Check if your product is safe on the UK electrical product recall. Search [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/)
- **Register your product** - make it easier for the manufacturer to get in touch with you if it turns out the item you've bought is somehow faulty or dangerous. Visit [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/product-registration/](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/product-registration/)
- Check for visible damage like cracks, frayed cords, exposed wires, or loose connections on the appliance and its power cord.
- Make sure the plug fits securely in the socket, and the pins aren't bent or damaged.
- Listen for odd noises or any burning smell when using the appliance.
- Check the appliance manual for specific safety and maintenance instructions.

## **Electrical checks we carry out to keep your home safe**

We are legally required to carry out an Electrical Inspection Condition Report (EICR) of all homes every five years.

This is a safety inspection of the electrics in your home. It includes checking for any signs of wear, damage, or potential hazards, such as frayed wires or faulty connections. These checks are essential to prevent

a fire, as electrical issues can lead to devastating house fires. It does not include checking your appliances.

We will contact you when your home is due for an EICR. It's important to keep or rearrange the appointment.

Please report any electrical repairs to Mears by calling **0800 023 4320**.

## **Watch a short film for Electrical Fire Safety Week 2025**

Electrical Safety First have created the short film 'Harmless', to show how the dangers in your home aren't always obvious

Watch the film on Youtube at [youtube.com/watch?v=pPzLmBxBceA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=pPzLmBxBceA)

This film is 3 minutes long.

## **Contents insurance - are you covered?**

We recommend you take out contents insurance. This can cover the cost of replacing your belongings - protecting you against fire, theft and other risks.

As your landlord, our insurance only covers the building you live in, not your belongings.

## **What does contents insurance cover?**

If you were to tip your home upside down, contents insurance typically covers everything that would fall out.

The exact cover varies between insurers and policies, but most will help pay for repairs or replacements for your belongings due to:

- theft
- fire
- flood
- loss

## **What contents insurance doesn't cover?**

Most insurance policies won't cover things like:

- normal wear and tear
- deliberate damage

- accidental damage
- damage to a computer caused by a virus

## How can I get contents insurance?

When getting contents insurance, you're usually asked how much it would cost to replace the entire contents of your home. This will help you work out how much an insurer would cover your contents for.

To find out more about how to work out the value of your contents and get a contents insurance quote:

- Visit [Money Saving Expert.com](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com) to get tips on getting cheap contents insurance.
- Try [Money Helper's free online Budget Planner](#) to work out if you can afford a policy.

## Tackling housing and tenancy fraud

Tenancy fraud is when someone illegally occupies a property or provides false information to get a tenancy. It can delay the allocation of homes and put those entitled to housing at risk.

Tenancy fraud is a criminal offence. Convictions can result in a fine, imprisonment or both. The courts also have the power to make the tenant pay back any profit made from the fraud.

Examples of tenancy fraud:

- **Application/Allocation fraud:** Providing false information during the application process.
- **Subletting fraud:** Renting out a property without permission from the landlord.
- **Succession fraud:** Illegally claiming a tenancy after the original tenant has passed away.
- **Right to Buy fraud:** Misrepresenting information to purchase a property at a discount.

## Outcome of a Right to Buy fraud case

We've recovered one of our few four-bedroom houses after uncovering a Right to Buy (RTB) fraud. At first, we struggled to get into the property for routine appointments. Tenancy Audits showed the tenant wasn't usually home. We also got complaints about teenagers living there.

The tenant applied to buy the house. We investigated and found the tenant spent most of their time outside the UK, meaning it wasn't their main home. They denied this when questioned. We then served a notice to take back the property with the court.

The tenant ended their tenancy before going to court. We got the house back, and the RTB application was dropped. Selling the house through RTB would have meant an £87,200 discount. Now, a family from our waiting list has a much needed four bedroom home.

If you suspect that fraud has been committed in relation to a council tenancy. Please report it at [thanet.gov.uk/reporttenancyfraud/](https://thanet.gov.uk/reporttenancyfraud/)

## Right to Buy

Right to Buy allows most council tenants to buy their council home at a discount.

You can apply to buy your home if:

- it's your only or main home
- it's self-contained
- you're a secure tenant
- you've had a public sector landlord for three years - it does not have to be three years in a row

When we get your application, we will visit your home and make a valuation at the current market rate. As a tenant, you are currently able to get a maximum discount of £38,000 to help you buy the home you are currently renting from us.

## Working out the discount

There are different discount levels for houses and flats. If you're buying with someone else, you count the years of whoever's been a public sector tenant for the longest.

## **Houses**

You get a 35% discount if you've been a public sector tenant for between three and five years.

After five years, the discount goes up by 1% for every extra year you've been a tenant, up to the maximum discount amount.

## **Flats**

You get a 50% discount if you've been a public sector tenant for between three and five years. The discount is capped at £38,000 as this is the maximum discount available.

After five years, the discount goes up 2% for every extra year you've been a tenant, up to the maximum discount amount.

## **Joint applications**

Joint applications can be made with someone who shares your tenancy. Or up to three family members who've lived with you for the past 12 months (even if they do not share your tenancy).

The discount is based on:

- the type of property you're buying - a flat or house
- the value of your home
- where you live

## **Maximum discount**

The maximum discount you can get is whichever is lower:

- 70% of the value of your property
- the maximum discount for your region

For more information visit [thanet.gov.uk/right-to-buy/](https://thanet.gov.uk/right-to-buy/)

## Annual Report 2023/24 Overview

Our Annual Report highlights the achievements of Tenant and Leaseholder Services over the past year.

Key figures include managing 3,080 general needs homes and completing 12,400 repairs.

We invested over £6.5 million in improvements and secured £29.56 million external funding for tower block refurbishments.

Read the full report at [thanet.gov.uk/policies-and-reports](https://thanet.gov.uk/policies-and-reports)

## How to contact Tenant and Leaseholder Services

If you need help contacting us, you can ask an advocate to speak to us on your behalf. Your advocate can be whoever you choose, a family member, friend or neighbour. They can't make decisions for you, but can support you to say what you want to.

General housing enquiries

Call: **01843 577575**

Email: [myhome@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:myhome@thanet.gov.uk)

### For household and communal repairs, contact Mears

Call: 0800 023 4320

Text: 'thanetrepairs' and your message to 63277

Email: [thanet.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:thanet.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk)

### For gas, hot water and heating, contact BSW Heating

Call: 0800 1422761 (24 hours)

Email: [enquiries@bsw-heating.com](mailto:enquiries@bsw-heating.com)

If you smell gas, please call the National Gas Emergency FREEPHONE number on 0800 111 999.

## Complaints and compliments

You can tell us about the service you received from us.

Online: [thanet.gov.uk/services/complaints-compliments](https://thanet.gov.uk/services/complaints-compliments)

Email: [Customer.Feedback@Thanet.gov.uk](mailto:Customer.Feedback@Thanet.gov.uk)

Call: 01843 577000

Post: Customer Feedback, Thanet District Council, PO Box 9, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent CT9 1XZ.

Visit [thanet.gov.uk/myhome](http://thanet.gov.uk/myhome) for more information.

**For all other Thanet District Council services**

Call: 01843 577000

Visit: [thanet.gov.uk](http://thanet.gov.uk)

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