

Residents' Annual Report 2022



WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Introduction to Residents' Annual Report 2022

Welcome to the Residents' Annual Report for 2022, we hope you enjoy reading it.

During the last year we made further efforts to understand our residents' priorities by expanding the range of ways in which we make contact, for example through surveys including the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures feedback.

The Residents' Scrutiny Panel put in a lot of work, taking 'deep dives' into important issues such as repairs and employment and training. I thank the panel members for their time and efforts, which are enormously helpful to shaping and improving our services.

As you may know we have been rethinking our approach to supporting communities and last year we concluded this work. Taking the lessons from a wide-ranging study in Swanley, we are making significant changes to ensure that our communities efforts focus more directly on our residents and their immediate neighbourhoods.

The cost of living has been on everyone's minds recently. We want to help residents through these tough times but can only do this when we know about problems. Please don't leave it too long to speak with the team if you're feeling the pinch.

The condition of homes across the sector, particularly those with damp and mould problems, was rightly highlighted in the media over the last year. Staff have worked hard to spot these cases as quickly as possible and have it as priority to support residents. We know this is a high risk in some properties due to the building structure but, again, please let us know as soon as possible if you're having problems of this type.

I would like to acknowledge the continued excellent contribution of our Resident Board Members Angela George, Megan Morven and Ben Cooper who ensure that our Board discussions retain a focus on you, our residents.

Finally, this is my final contribution to this report as I step down from my role as Chair of the West Kent Board after the maximum nine-year term. It has been a great privilege to hold this position and I wish everyone at West Kent, residents, and staff, well for the future.

Colin Wilby
Chair - Board of Management



Resident Introduction



Another year has gone by and so much has happened in that time. Whether it be the lasting impact of the pandemic, or the cost of living, many of us have been impacted in one way or another.

The Resident Scrutiny Panel is still going strong and after completing a review of the repairs service in 2022, we carefully chose the topic of our next review - how West Kent hears the voice of residents. As part of this, we'll engage with wider groups of residents and invite them to meet with us both digitally and face-to-face. The aim of this review is to make sure all residents' voices are heard at West Kent, including those who may not have access to digital channels, and we'll be preparing a report and set of recommendations on how West Kent can improve in this area. We'll share our report in Neighbourhood News and on our website once it's finished in 2023.

As a panel we work closely with West Kent and we know they want to keep channels of communication open so that when there is a problem, they can act upon it as quickly as possible. We work collaboratively and constructively to help make improvements that benefit residents.

This annual report is a way West Kent can keep us informed on how they are performing and the work they do with residents and in communities.

Our work as a scrutiny panel is very positive and we thoroughly enjoy speaking and listening to other residents and working with staff at West Kent. Let's keep the dialogue going and keep working together to make changes for the better.

Fen Stanley
Scrutiny Panel Member



Involving residents in improving our services



We put residents at the heart of everything that we do. So, every year, a key part of our work is encouraging residents to work with us to improve our services and have their voices heard. 2022 was a busy year for the resident involvement team and for our involved residents.

We refreshed our involvement model, giving residents more opportunities to take part. We have also strengthened links between involved residents and our Board, so the voice of residents is heard at every level of the organisation. Residents were also involved in interviewing new Board members in 2022.

A new resident inspector programme was created, and we now have 56 residents signed up. The inspectors check on communal services like cleaning and gardening and let us know how our contractors are performing so we can follow up and resolve any issues.

Early in 2022, residents were involved in a national consultation with the Regulator of Social Housing, sharing their views on the draft Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey, which contributed to our consultation response to the Regulator.

We recruited mystery shoppers to help us check that residents are getting the best service from our customer serviceteam, with the first mystery shopping taking place in early 2023.

Throughout the year we worked with residents in the St Mary's area of Swanley, supporting them to set up a resident action group so we can work with them to make improvements in their local community.



In 2022 we started the process of choosing a new grounds maintenance provider. We met with residents to share their views on the current service, and several residents were also involved in scoring the bids for the new contract.

West Kent's Resident Scrutiny Panel

The West Kent Resident Scrutiny Panel is a small group of residents who meet regularly to review our performance information, ask questions, hold us to account and suggest ways we could improve.

As well as meeting every three months to look at how we are performing, the panel also carried out an in-depth review of the repairs service and created a set of recommendations on service improvements. Their recommendations will be implemented across the organisation where possible and the panel will receive regular progress updates.

The panel also began another in-depth review of how the voice of residents is heard. This involves meeting with staff across the business, reviewing data and meeting with other residents to find out their views. This review has continued into 2023 and once complete, the panel will move on to review our approach to community safety, which will include how we manage anti-social behaviour.

The panel receive lots of training and support to carry out their roles and throughout 2022 attended a series of national webinars and conferences to meet other involved residents and to learn more about wider issues in the housing sector.

We welcomed a new member, Cathy Morgan to the panel, who we are very much looking forward to working with.

You can find out all the latest resident involvement news, read the scrutiny panels reports, and share your views, by visiting the resident involvement area of our website.

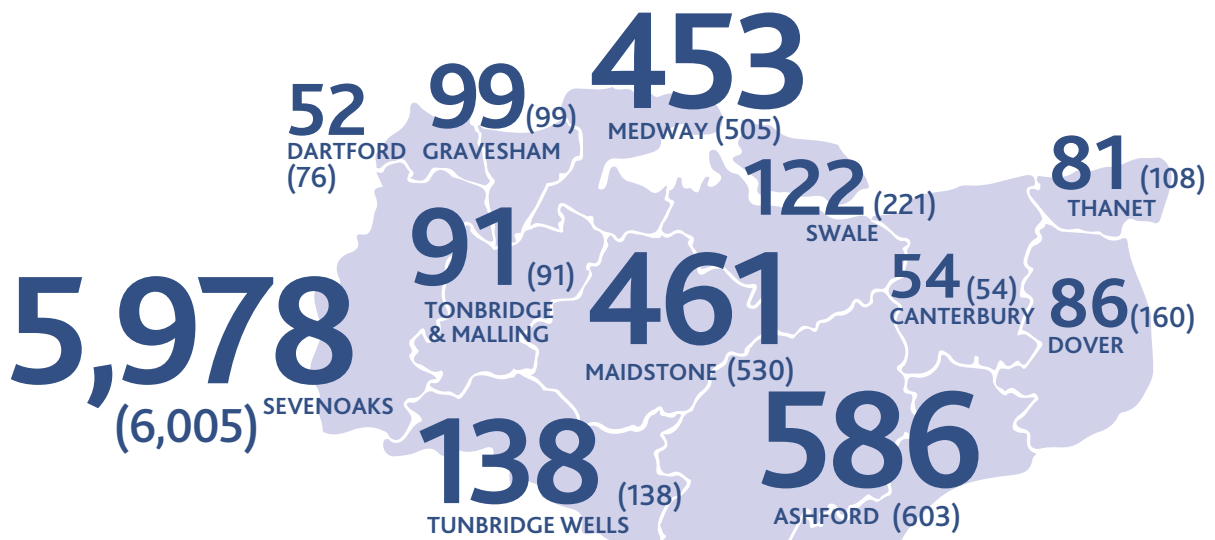
If you would like to join our contact list, please get in touch via the details below residentinvolvement@wkha.org.uk or 01732 749908.



Where are our homes?



At the end of December 2022 we owned and managed 8,201 homes across Kent.



TOTAL
8,201 (8,590)

Our current homes by local authority

(in brackets includes homes under construction)

	2022	2021
Rented	6,031	5,944
Rented – older people	1,110	1,110
Shared Ownership	813	771
Total social housing homes	7,954	7,825
Homes managed by others	-	7
Leaseholders	247	237
Total owned and managed accommodation	8,201	8,069
Homes under construction	389	409

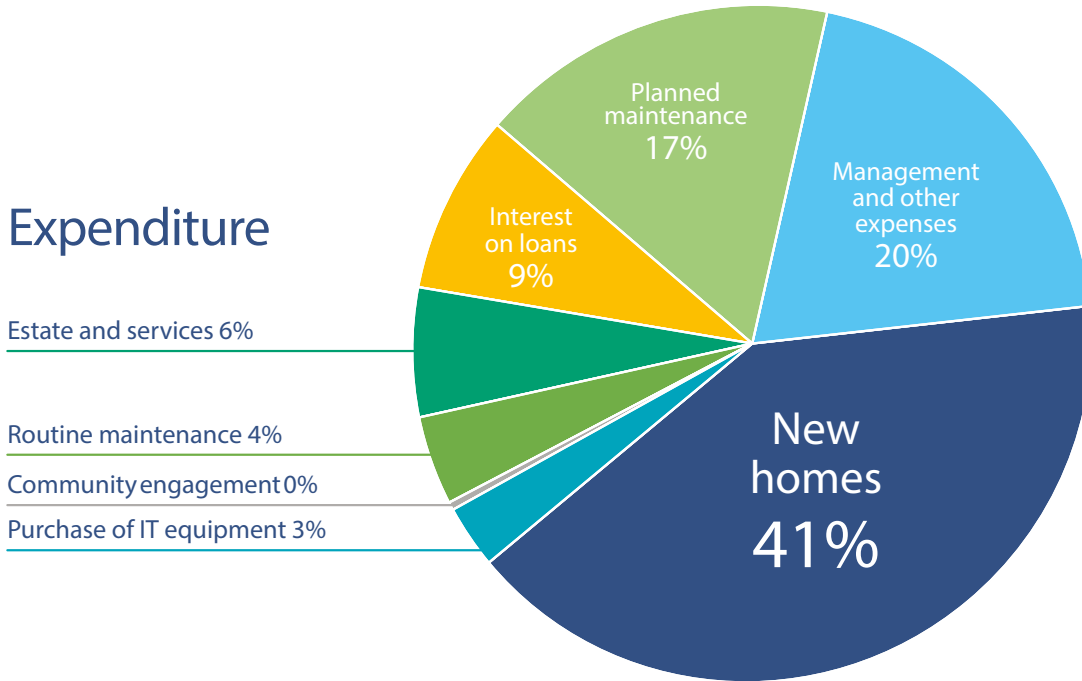
The homes we manage

Letting our homes

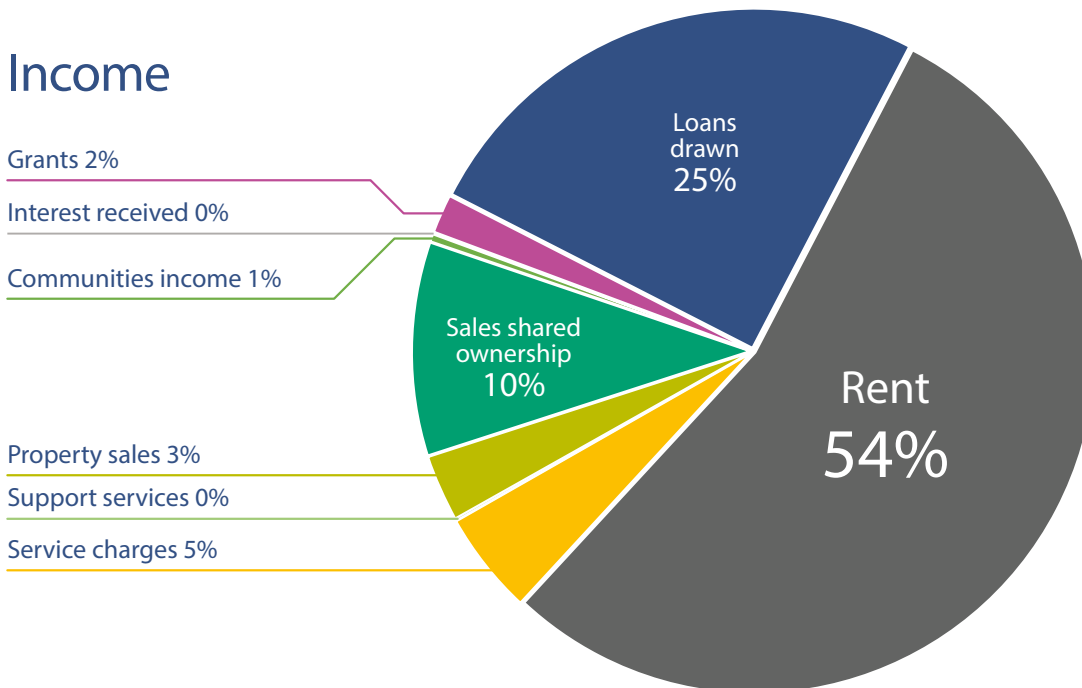
In 2022, we let 491 homes, down from 519 in 2021, when we had more residents moving in following Covid-19. The average time to let a home to a resident was 63 days, our target is 40 days. We are working to let our homes more quickly so people that need homes can move in. We are also focussing on the quality of homes as previous feedback from new residents showed that we didn't always get this right. We still want to improve but are really pleased that the satisfaction with moving into a new home scored 4.2 out of 5 in 2022 in our Rant and Rave satisfaction survey.

How your rent is spent

Expenditure



Income



Our income is supplemented by loan financing to support our investment in new homes.

New homes

In 2022 we built 148 new homes and sold 69 shared ownership (part buy, part rent) homes. We worked to reduce the number of snags and defects in the homes we build. This improved from 2.9 defects per home in 2021 to 1.9 in 2022. In 2023 we aim to deliver 295 new homes, including the completion of the regeneration of three sites that had old garages on them to build 14 new homes for social rent. We will also start to look at regenerating some of our empty existing homes that are older and less energy efficient.





Keeping you and your neighbourhoods safe

Our community safety and tenancy services teams have continued to work hard with police, local authorities and other agencies to keep your neighbourhoods safe.

In 2022 we launched our new community safety policy and procedure. The new policy is focused on helping residents live safely in their homes and changing behaviours that might negatively impact our communities. This means our service offer is much clearer and residents know what to expect.

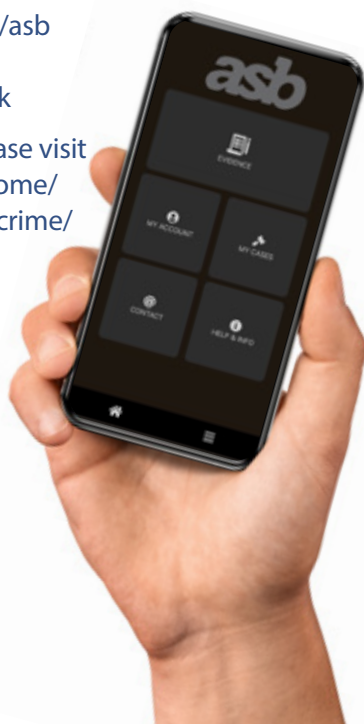


To help us investigate reports of community safety issues we introduced an anti-social behaviour (ASB) app. This app allows residents who have an open community safety case with us to upload diary entries, sound recordings, videos and photographs.

If you're experiencing ASB in your local community, please consider speaking to your neighbours first and let them know how their behaviour is affecting you. If this isn't possible or it relates to a wider ASB issue, please let us know. You can report anti-social behaviour to us in several ways:

Visiting www.westkent.org/asb
Calling 01732 749400
Emailing help@wkha.org.uk

To read our ASB policy, please visit www.westkent.org/your-home/anti-social-behaviour-and-crime/



Fire

- We carry out regular checks of communal parts of our blocks of flats called 'fire risk assessments'.



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 6,536 gas safety checks in 2022.

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.

Compliments, complaints and feedback

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. We also want to hear from you, when things do go well, and we track compliments across our teams.

Unlike many others in the housing sector, we did not have an increase in complaints during the year. We had 357 formal complaints, compared with 379 in 2021.

Like other housing providers we had an increase in the number of cases escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service. We received the determination for five cases in 2022 and had no cases where maladministration or severe maladministration were found. Three cases had findings of service failure and in the other two cases the Housing Ombudsman agreed we had managed the complaints correctly.

We completed an assessment against the updated Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code, which confirmed we comply in all areas.

Our customer resolution team manage all our complaints through to resolution and we have a complex case review with operational teams so we can focus on learning from complaints and prevent poor service from happening again. 60% of complaints were upheld at the first stage and 37.5% at stage two. The top reason for complaints was repairs. The scrutiny panel receive regular updates on the themes of complaints, and this helps them choose areas of the organisation to look at in more depth.

We received:



Complaints



Top reasons for complaints

Repairs

We received 177 complaints about repairs, which were mostly about the length of time to complete the work, as well as poor communication from us to you about when the work would be done.

Staff

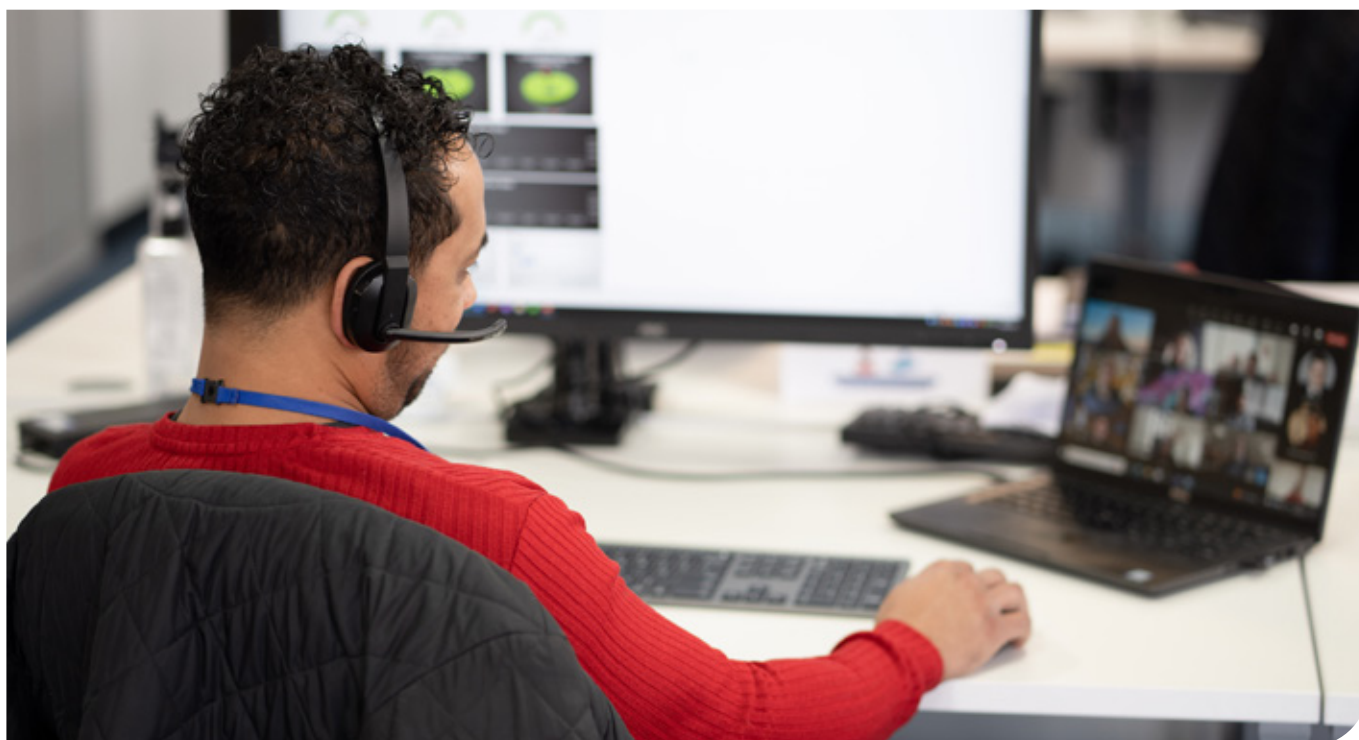
We received 44 complaints about members of staff, these were mostly about staff attitude when dealing with issues and the length of time it took to get back to residents.

Housing and estate management

We received 30 complaints about housing and estate management, these were mostly about how we manage anti-social behaviour.

Rent and service charges

We received 30 complaints about rent and service charge issues, these were mainly about the cost of service charges.





Using your feedback to improve our services

You said...

Repairs actions are often 'lost' and further works that are needed are not always completed without us having to chase.

We did

We have changed how we manage orders to ensure follow on works are booked. Our new IT system due to launch late 2023 will allow you to track repairs and their status on our new customer portal.

We are committed to using feedback collected from different groups of residents who contact us to shape our annual plans and drive improvements across our services. We started collecting quarterly feedback using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) in October 2022, which are collected by all housing associations and local authorities who manage housing.

We have continued to work with our partner, Rant & Rave to get monthly feedback from you about repairs, anti-social behaviour, making a complaint, calling our

customer services team, moving into a home, and buying a shared ownership home. Our overall feedback score for 2022 was 4.3 out of 5. Where we receive a low score (1 or 2), we call to see what we can do to make things right.

We also completed the West Kent census, where we updated information about you and your households including age, health, disability, and contact details. This information is being used to tailor services that you receive, making them better for you in the future.

Maintaining your home

Contractors

Monthly feedback has helped us improve our repairs service directly led to a change in contractor relationships. As a result, we ended the year with a satisfaction rating of 4.3 out of 5. Teams across West Kent hold regular meetings with contractors to make sure they're completing the work to a high standard, and within the timescales set. Performance information is regularly reviewed to make sure any issues are addressed.

This has been supported by a range of new contract management systems and processes to help keep the contractors we work with, accountable for the services they deliver to you. Our staff also complete inspections after planned works and repairs, to make sure standards are kept.

Brenwards 2022

Building & Electrical

Brenwards completed 98.6% of their 28,410 jobs on target and spent £16.7m

iNHomes

Gas and plumbing

In 2022, iNHomes completed 94.3% of their 23,580 jobs on target and spent £3m



Bridglands 2022

Grounds Maintenance

Bridglands completed 96.88% of their 1,187 jobs on target and spent £658,815

Mila 2022

Window & Door Replacements

Mila completed 67.1% of their 323 jobs on target and spent £510,952

Ian Williams 2022

External Painting & Decorating

Ian Williams completed 98.7% of their 1,076 jobs on target and spent £1,167,750

Sureserve 2022

Fire Doors

Sureserve completed 46.5% of their 259 jobs on target and spent £402,000



We understand that a well-maintained home is a priority for all our residents. A key priority is improving the fuel efficiency of homes and our planned investment is focusing on homes and residents at the highest risk of fuel poverty.

From the recent STAR (survey of tenants and residents) survey, it was clear that residents wanted new windows and doors. In response to this, we have increased the numbers we will be replacing in 2023. The number of windows planned for 2023 is a 57% increase from 2022 and the number of doors is a 185% increase from 2022.

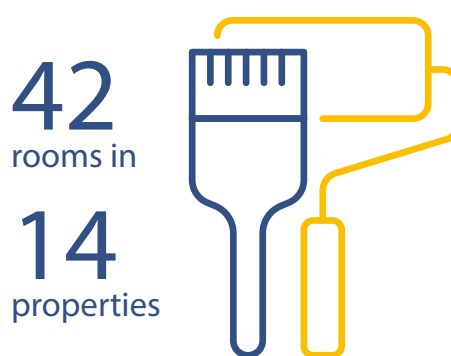
We have taken a proactive approach to address the limited cases of damp and mould in our homes. We reviewed the last five years' records of repairs to identify the homes where damp and mould could be present and have contacted the residents to understand if there are ongoing

problems. We also contacted all residents that mentioned damp and mould in the STAR survey and arranged for a surveyor to attend where required.

Where residents mention damp and mould in the Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) surveys we are advised by Acuity, the organisation that make the calls within 24 hours and follow these comments up. We also have a dedicated team to respond to all reported cases. We encourage all residents to contact us if they have damp and mould in their homes. We have provided guidance to our residents in Neighbourhood News, across our website and social media. In the table below we have shown the number of improvements that we completed in the past two years and our targets for 2023.

	2021	2022	2023 Target
Bathroom	123	258	122
Boiler	366	363	320
Doors	213	443	1266
Kitchen	113	207	251
Air source heating system	35	27	0
Electric heating system	17	67	41
Roofs	10	4	10
Windows	25	49	77

Housing plus service rooms decorated



* Residents meeting certain criteria can take advantage of some free decorating services.



Communities



In 2022 we carried out a review of our communities services, gathering residents' views on their priorities. This gave us information to reshape the team to better support our residents, particularly those in financial hardship.

We delivered a community development pilot in St Mary's, Swanley, which helped us develop our

principles for working in our communities. We spoke to almost 300 households about what they want from their community, and through the creation of a resident's action group were able to address the issues raised and re-engage a community that had felt very isolated coming out of the pandemic.

Highlights from 2022

Supported 4,775 people with communities work including:

- Our youth services team worked with 739 children and young people through our youth clubs, outreach and life skills work, with children ranging from ages 8 to 19.
- Delivering 1,078 support interventions to help sustain tenancies.
- Handled 407 employment and training referrals (387 individuals), working closely with 160 tenants. 67 people were supported into employment and another 50 into training.
- We achieved 6,825 attendances across our HOUSE project in Edenbridge and Young Adventurers groups, reaching 739 individual young people.
- Completed 5,480 interventions with young people in schools and through detached youth work.
- Provided furniture to 706 tenants and 1,090 local customers through our Abacus store. Abacus also hosted 796 volunteer hours, recycled 770 furniture donations, diverting 73,972 kilos of waste from landfill.
- Partnered with Sevenoaks District Council to deliver 43 furniture hardship packs (229 furniture items), through Abacus, to local homeless people moving into temporary accommodation.
- Worked with 67 different partners.
- Awarded £11.7k of grant funding to community groups and organisations across Kent to deliver their own community activities.
- Secured an additional £43k of income paid directly to our tenants through benefits and grants.

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, career advice and deliver a range of training courses including, self-employment workshops, 'Mums into Business', beauty, barista, CSCS and NVQ Level 1 working in schools.

In 2022 we ran several local job fairs in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and expanded our face-to-face job hubs. We continued to support residents online and exceeded our annual target for the number of residents we have got into work.

Number of people helped into work	67
Number of contacts with people	1219
Number of clients referred to the team	239
Job fairs (virtual and face-to-face)	695
Number of people attended a training event	50



Abacus furniture stores

Abacus provides low-cost furniture to those in need, diverts good quality furniture from landfill and provides training and employment opportunities. The changes to financial and household needs of families after the pandemic highlighted the continued importance of the project. The team at Abacus works closely with partners including Sevenoaks District Council to help people experience less financial strain.

This year saw the continuation of the 'In Sheds' project, which provides the opportunity for people to take part in practical activities such as woodworking and develop new skills in a group setting. The group is aimed at residents who may benefit from improving their social connections with others, to support positive mental health and combat issues such as social isolation after retirement or redundancy.

We remain committed to reducing our carbon footprint and have saved 74 tonnes of unwanted furniture items going to landfill by finding them new homes for reuse, recycling and repurpose.



Your wellbeing and support



We know things are difficult for some of our residents due to various financial pressures and the cost of living. We want to make sure our services provide the best and most accessible support possible. To meet the various challenges head on, we have made changes across the business, including:

- Creating new roles and bringing in professional expertise to provide information and support on; welfare benefits, fuel and food poverty to proactively support our most vulnerable
- Training more staff to recognise signs of hardship so we can intervene more quickly and effectively
- Strengthening our teams to provide greater advice and support to all residents on financial and wellbeing issues
- Prioritising tackling issues around energy costs by directly intervening with residents who are struggling
- Working with partners such as Green Doctor and Citizen's Advice to signpost to advice and information.

Financial wellbeing

We worked with 384 residents in 2022 to improve their financial circumstances and live better in their homes.

This happened in a range of ways, including:

- Assisting in applications for benefits and grants to maximise residents' income
- Supporting vulnerable new residents in setting up their home
- Referring residents to food banks
- Helping vulnerable residents in accessing specialist services to meet their needs.

This resulted in a range of positive outcomes, including:

- Successfully obtaining **£78,209** in benefits and grants for residents
- Issuing **137** food bank vouchers for residents in need.

Through the communities review we have now set up specialist internal teams, with expert support around improving financial hardship, energy efficiency and other complex issues.

For support, please visit www.westkent.org/your-home/help-for-you or call 01732 749400

Older people



We own and manage 1,110 homes across Kent for those aged 55 and over.

We understand the importance of having quality homes and stable support networks as we age. Our accommodation for those aged over 55 offers different levels of support.

The housing options available are:

- Independent living – A flat with a community environment for over 55's, offering individuals an opportunity to get involved. Some may have communal facilities such as a communal lounge, kitchen, or laundry facilities.
- Sheltered housing – Independent living within a scheme, with support from a West Kent staff member if needed. These schemes will have a communal lounge, kitchen, garden, laundry room, and may have a guest room available for friends and family to stay over.

- Extra Care – For people aged 55 and over who have some care needs but wish to remain living as independently as possible. Care staff are on site 24 hours a day, with the added benefit of a restaurant, hair salons, wellbeing services and even gym facilities in some schemes.

Activities take place across most of the schemes, with tenants often having their own social committees, leading what they would like to take part in. These have included everything from coffee mornings to fitness afternoons, to race nights and karaoke, and lots more in between.

If you or a family member are interested in finding out more about our homes for over 55's, please visit - www.westkent.org/find-a-home/homes-for-over-55s or call 01732 749400

This year we celebrated the opening of the new sensory garden at Copperfields, our Extra Care scheme in Ramsgate. This project was begun by the tenants themselves with help from a local charity, Starlings Support, and then managed by our own staff and developed to provide a space of relaxation and reflection for residents and families. West Kent's building and electrical contractor, Brenwards, partly funded and carried out the works as part of their commitment to having a positive social impact.



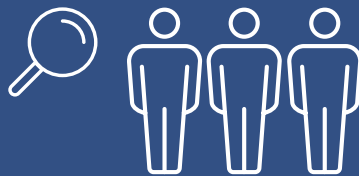
Plans for 2023

In 2023 we will:

Use your feedback to drive improvements and create a new resident involvement strategy, that gives you more opportunities to get involved and shape our services.



Work with our resident scrutiny panel, who will deliver their report and recommendations on how West Kent hears the voice of residents and begin a deep-dive review of our community safety service, focussing on anti-social behaviour.



Deliver hundreds of new homes that have been designed to meet the needs of current and future residents.



Move away from a 'just in time' approach to a 'five-year plan' for our windows and doors. This means we will replace windows and doors before the end of their life. In 2023 we are aiming to replace the windows of 77 homes and 1,266 doors, that works towards our goal of ensuring every home is at EPC C rating by 2030.



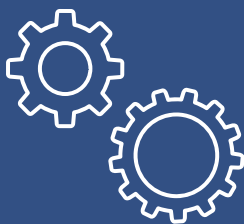
Work with you to ensure that your homes are as warm, safe and energy efficient as possible, including finding solutions where there may be issues related to damp and mould and providing better information, advice and support to help reduce your energy bills.



Extend our communities offer to our homes and communities across Kent, including community development projects in Edenbridge and the St Mary's and White Oak areas of Swanley and targeted cost of living support for those who need advice on their income, benefits and fuel costs.



Implement a new housing management system; improving how we communicate with you, how you interact with our systems and the customer service you receive.



Improve the quality and maintenance of the homes we let including updating the Wi-Fi available in eight of our over-55 schemes and implementing a new grounds maintenance contract.



Provide regular and transparent performance information to our resident scrutiny panel so they can continue to hold us to account and work with us constructively to improve.



Contact us



To get involved and help improve our services email residentinvolvement@wkha.org or call 01732 749908


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 marketing team: communicationsteam@wkha.org.uk

WestKent


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

 westkent.org

 01732 749400

 @west_kent

 WestKentHA

 @westkenthousingassociation

 @1WestKent

* '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.