

Melvin's story

Melvin Harwood is a member of our resident scrutiny panel and lives in Edenbridge. Here's what he had to say about his time as a resident. [Watch Melvin's full story here](#)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1j0UTuVs_m0&t=7s



"I've been a tenant of West Kent for 31 years. I was living in my car for about four months outside of a firm in Edenbridge. It wasn't a way to live—I was getting ill and was on antibiotics every two months. The moment I came around and met the housing officer, she showed me around the flat. In fact, I cried because it was the first time in my whole life, I actually had security.

I put my name down on the list, and then, after that, I received a phone call asking if I would like to take the property. I said, "Yeah, of course." West Kent is a great landlord. They're more than just a landlord—they are here to help us with any problems. They resolve issues and sort everything out; they are a very caring housing association. When I got this property and signed the tenancy agreement, it was lovely. It's like I finally had a home, a roof over my head, and I was so pleased. Otherwise, I don't know what I would have done.

The scrutiny panel is brilliant. When we go to these meetings, we can put forward our points of view about what needs to be done and how quickly. For me, it means that West Kent is actually listening to the tenants. No matter the problems you may have in your home—whether it's a leaking roof or issues with mould or damp, which are big issues—we can all discuss them on the panel, and West Kent will sort out a solution and decide how we can treat these problems.

I'm proud to be a tenant of West Kent because they've given me a home and have always been kind to me. If it wasn't for them, I'd probably still be on the street. But when I got this home, I was so happy in my life, and yes, I did cry. Basically, at the end of the day, I had a home."

Our timeline: 1989 to 2024

2017

We re-opened our new £1m sheltered scheme for people with learning difficulties at Cedar Court, Edenbridge.

2020

We adapt to the pandemic, moving lots of our support services online and launching our cost-of-living campaign.

2022

We evolved our resident scrutiny panel, who meet regularly to consider how we can deliver better service to our residents and discuss their findings with our Board.

2024

We start work on our biggest ever housing development, Castor Park in Maidstone. 106 rent and shared ownership homes will be ready for new residents to move into by 2026.



Welcome to our 35th anniversary edition!

We are passionate about the role a housing association can play in society and believe the values of an organisation are what makes it special.

We believe that a good home is a foundation for doing well in life. Our core purpose is to help the many people for whom a good home (to rent or buy) is too expensive, and to nurture their communities. We are proud to invest in our communities and work hard to understand need, and shape services that increase opportunities, build resilience and promote wellbeing.

We began life as a housing association on the 23 March 1989. Our mission and vision remain the same as it was back in 1989, provide people with places to live and give them space to grow.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories of a few of our staff and residents to celebrate our 35th year.

To find out more about our 35 years of West Kent campaign, please visit: www.westkent.org/about-us/35-years-of-west-kent

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

35TH
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

Angela's story

Angela George is one of our resident board members and lives in Swanley with her family. Angela has over thirty years of experience in resident involvement and shares her experiences with us. [Watch Angela's full story here](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWeociqjY&t=14s>



"I'm a resident board member at West Kent Housing Association. I became a resident at West Kent Housing during the stock transfer. I moved from London to Swanley when I met my husband, who was already a West Kent resident. By association, I became one too.

I started getting to know the community and the area more. On my walks with my daughter, I began noticing what was wrong and what needed improvement in the area we lived in. That was how I became involved. If there were things I wasn't happy with, I would go on Google to find out who was responsible. Issues like litter, trolleys, grass cuttings, and stuff like that. I started noticing more and more, and that's how I got involved with West Kent.

When we did one of our reviews about the building and design, a design team was set up by West Kent, mostly consisting of residents. We sat down with the developers because, in my view, you should give people a good quality

of life. They'll manage your property better than if you just say, "This is what you get; you should be happy to have a roof over your head." That is not the way to treat people.

This approach was taken on board, and since then, I've been happy with the outcomes. Every time I see new developments now, I always think, "Well done, West Kent. You're actually listening to us."

West Kent's ethos reflects my own values: honesty, dedication, doing what you say, respect, quality of life, and dignity. These are the reasons I've been an involved resident for so long. West Kent's principles reflect who I am, and this is why I have never, ever been shy to say I'm a West Kent resident. Humanity, respect, and social conscience—that's what West Kent is to me."

Veronica's story

Veronica works in our Neighbourhood Housing team and has been at West Kent for 33 years. Here's what she had to say about her time at West Kent as both a staff member and a resident. [Watch Veronica's full story here](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPgJXu80Q8M&t=2s>



"My role at West Kent is Neighbourhood Housing Coordinator, working alongside the Neighbourhood Housing Officers (NHOs) and supporting them in their role.

My role has evolved over the years in that it's got bigger. The role was only created in 2019 and when I first started, I was doing quite small things just to help NHOs. But as time has gone on, my role has gotten bigger and bigger, and I do more now to help them. The more I can do behind the scenes for them, the more time they have, to be out and about and be front facing with tenants.

When I started 33 years ago, I was a stay-at-home mum during the day with a toddler and my husband went out to work during the day. In the evenings, I was doing office cleaning. One of the offices we worked in was cleaning, so one of the other ladies said "oh, there's a job going where I work during the day", and that was Hollybush Court, one of our over 55s schemes. So, I got a job there cleaning during the days while my son was at playgroup, and it's gone on from there.

I've changed jobs, as my life has changed. I work nearly full-time now during the day, so it's evolved with me. As my life has changed,

my work has changed, and West Kent have allowed that to happen. They've helped me. They've supported me, in changing my role to change my life. So, when my son went to school, I didn't just need to do a couple of hours cleaning anymore, so there was the opportunity to do a different role, and I applied, and I got it.

I am proud to work for West Kent. I like the fact we help our tenants. I am a tenant, so it's great. I see first-hand the things that we do for our tenants, how we really go out of our way to help our tenants. We have the employment schemes that we run, the support teams and our community teams – there's just so much that we do. And it does make you proud to know that you're part of that and you're helping people.

One of the schemes I've been really proud to be involved in was the play dates that we do in the summer for the children. They're good community days, and they bring everybody together, and that I think showcases our values. They're bringing everyone together for a happy community.

To me, West Kent is supportive, excellent and outstanding."

Our timeline: 1989 to 2024

Here are just some of our highlights from the last 35 years.

1989

West Kent is established! We take over ownership of 6,300 homes from Sevenoaks District Council in one of the first large-scale transfers.

1990

Our £2.5 million over 55s scheme, Hollybush Court is officially opened providing homes for around 50 residents.

1991

We receive the first Housing Corporation allocation to build outside of the Sevenoaks District.

1994

We're first recognised as an Investor in People employer – one of the first housing associations to be awarded!

2003

We start working providing youth services to young people in the Sevenoaks District. We now provide programmes, clubs and support to hundreds of young people every year.

2010

The Linda Hogan Fund (now the West Kent Community Chest) was set up, providing funding to support community groups.

2014

We begin our partnership with Brenwards, our longest-standing contractor.

2015

We open the first of five new Kent Excellent Homes for All (KEHFA) over 55 schemes across Kent, providing high-quality homes for those over 55 who have a care need, but want to remain living independently.