

HOUSING MATTERS

Your homes, your news, your views

Hello

Welcome to the latest edition of Housing Matters, a newsletter for tenants and leaseholders of Ashford Borough Council, helping to keep you informed about your Housing Service.



If you would prefer a larger text version of this newsletter, please contact Tenant Engagement via email: tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk or call **01233 330700** to request.

News At Your Fingertips

For up-to-date housing news any time please visit our webpage:

www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-news

We regularly add articles to keep you informed about all things housing, from consultations you can take part in that help shape the service, to upcoming projects in your area. You can also sign up there for a version of this newsletter to be sent to your inbox every quarter, helping to save the environment, and save hassle by clicking directly through on featured weblinks.

Competition Time!

Our competition question in this edition is "What year did Cotton Hill House officially open". The correct answer can be found in this newsletter. Answers can be emailed along with your name, address and telephone number to **tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk**.

They can also be sent by post, addressed to Tenant Engagement at Ashford Borough Council, International House, Dover Place, Ashford, TN23 1HU. The lucky tenant or leaseholder, drawn at random from the correct entries, will win a shopping voucher. **The closing date for entries is Monday, 26 October 2026.**

Congratulations to our previous winner. Full competition terms and conditions can be viewed at **www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-matters-comp**

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Thank You

Thank you to the 209 tenants who responded to our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey. In previous years, we ran this survey yearly, collecting a large number of responses at once. This year, we'll be carrying out the survey every quarter and will collect the results together at the end of the year. We look forward to hearing from more of you as the year continues and expect to update you on the results in the next calendar year.

Introducing Our New Complaints Team

We're pleased to let you know that we now have a dedicated Complaints and Resolutions Team working within our Housing Department.

This new team has been created to make sure your concerns are handled clearly, fairly and resolved as soon as possible. We know that sometimes things go wrong, and when they do, it's important that you are listened to and supported.

We also use complaints as an opportunity to improve our services. Your feedback helps us learn, identify areas for improvement, and make changes that benefit all our customers.

What This Means for You

Your complaint will now be handled directly by a specialist team, instead of the managers you may have been speaking with previously. We'll make sure your concerns are fully understood and investigated impartially and a fair outcome is reached to resolve your concerns. You'll receive clear, consistent communication throughout.

Don't worry, you can still report complaints and concerns to us in the same way; more details of how to make a complaint are available on our website: **www.ashford.gov.uk/make-a-housing-complaint**. You can contact the team directly via housingresolutions@ashford.gov.uk.

We are currently developing additional information and resources, which will be available on our website and through resident communications in the coming months.

Need Independent Advice?

We handle complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code which sets standards for how social landlords manage complaints.

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent service that helps resolve disputes between residents and social landlords. You can contact them at any stage of your complaint for advice and support. Visit the Housing Ombudsman website, call **0300 111 3000**, email **info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk**, or complete their online complaint form. **www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk**



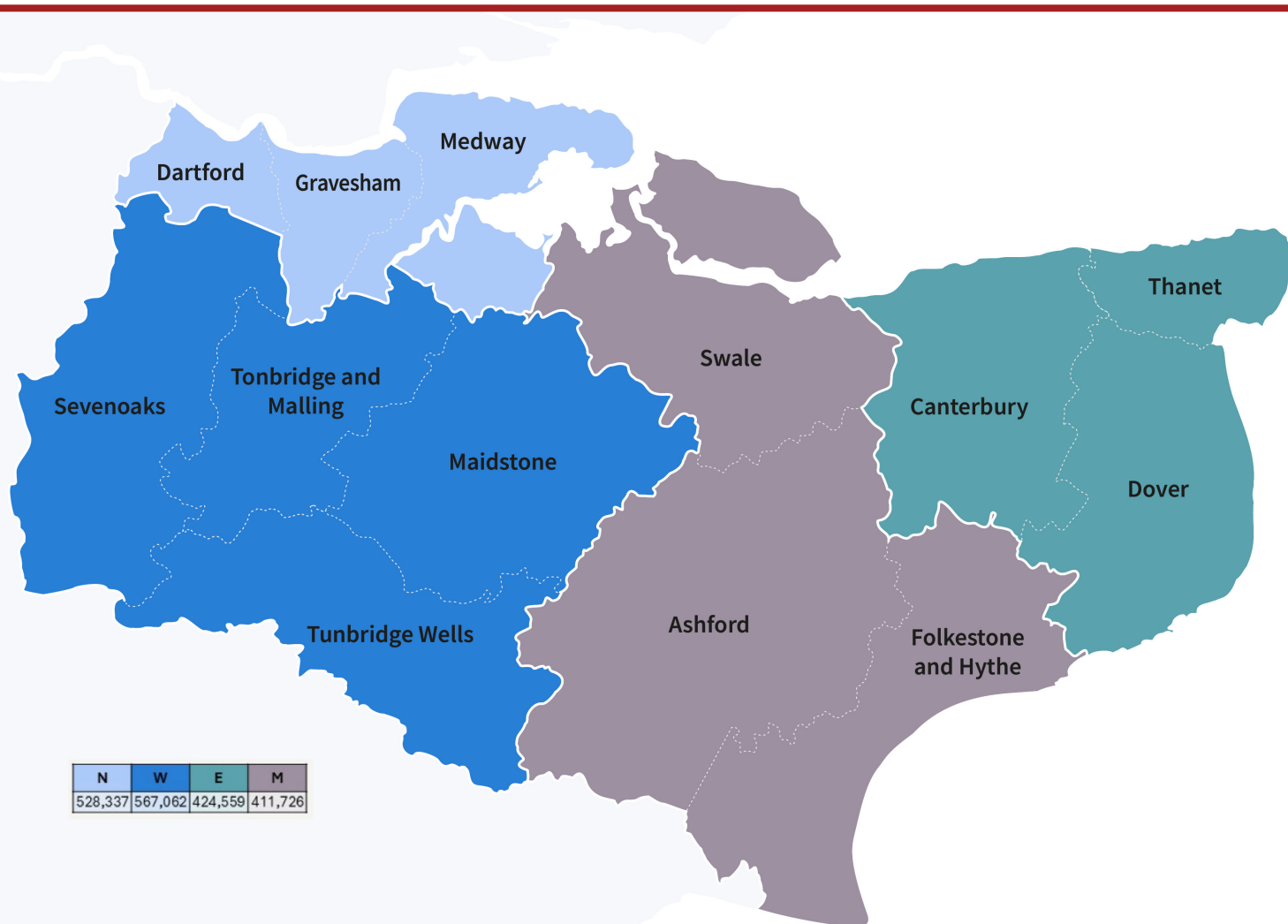
Local Government Reorganisation Announcement

The Government has confirmed the four-unitary (4B) model for Kent and Medway. Under this decision, the current two-tier system of Kent County Council and the district and borough councils will be replaced by four new unitary councils from April 2028. The Government said this was selected because it balances local accountability, financial sustainability and service delivery.

For Ashford, this means becoming part of a new Mid Kent unitary council alongside Swale Borough Council and Folkestone & Hythe District Council. For council tenants, there will be no immediate changes, and you will remain a council tenant after 2028. The main change is that the new Mid Kent council will become your landlord and will deliver all local council services, including housing, under a single organisation.

The decision on the geography is an important milestone, but it is only the beginning of the journey. We will work constructively with colleagues across Kent to help shape the new arrangements, ensure Ashford's voice is heard and support a smooth transition that protects services and delivers the best possible outcomes for our communities.

Further information can be found on the following website: kentcouncilleaders.org.uk



Repairs Improvement Update

We are continuing to improve our Repairs Service to provide a safer, faster and more reliable service for residents. Over the past year, we have invested in our teams, technology and contractor partnerships to help deliver better outcomes.

Investing In Our People

Our Repairs Inspectors are undertaking additional training, including Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and Damp & Mould training, helping us prepare for the introduction of Awaab's Law and ensuring homes remain safe and well maintained.

We have expanded our Repairs Inspection Team to eight inspectors, allowing us to:

- Respond to repair reports more quickly.
- Carry out more detailed inspections.
- Increase quality checks and post-inspections.
- Improve overall service standards.

We are embracing technology to make it easier for residents to access our service. Later this year, residents will be able to access video call appointments with Repairs Inspectors for some repair issues. This will help us:

- Diagnose certain repairs quicker.
- Provide advice without waiting for a visit.
- Complete some inspections remotely.
- Reduce unnecessary appointments and delays.

Dedicated Support For Complex Repairs

We have created a new Complex Works Team to manage larger or more challenging repairs. Residents will benefit from a single point of contact who will coordinate the work, monitor progress and keep them informed throughout the process.

Protecting residents from damp and mould remains a priority. We are recruiting two additional operatives to form a dedicated first-response team, enabling quicker action to make homes safe, carry out mould treatments and complete minor repairs while longer-term solutions are arranged.

Delivering an excellent repairs service relies on strong partnerships.

We are now co-locating key contractors alongside our Repairs Team, allowing us to work more collaboratively and resolve issues much more quickly.

By working together from the same location, we are improving communication, speeding up decision-making, reducing delays and creating stronger relationships.

Maintaining High Standards

We are reviewing our contractor arrangements to ensure we continue to receive high-quality workmanship, excellent customer service and value for money. We are also increasing post-inspections so that repairs are completed to the highest possible standard.



How Did We Do?

Our Performance Statistics

From April until June 2026, averaged



100% emergency repairs completed within timescale
target is 95%



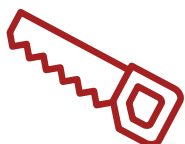
91% Repairs calls answered
target 90%



23.3 days
Average void works
target 21 days



66.7% repairs satisfaction



83.85% Routine repairs completed within timescale



65.4% tenant satisfaction



85% complaints handled within timescale

Gas Compliance: **99.95%**

Electrical Compliance: **99.29%**

Fire Compliance: **100%**

Lift Compliance: **100%**

Water Hygiene Compliance: **100%**

Asbestos Compliance: **100%**

Number of complaints from April to June 2026 Reported as total figures

200

number of repairs complaints

10

number of housing options complaints

20

number of neighbourhood complaints

17

number of lettings complaints

If you need assistance or have any problems submitting a complaint in person, please contact us by calling **01233 330700**.



For more news: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-news

Thank You

We have been introducing and reviewing some of our policies to make sure that we are providing housing services that meet your needs and you have been helping us. Thank you to all of our involved tenants for giving your time, feedback and ideas. Your involvement helps us better understand what matters most to you and plays a vital role in ensuring our services meet the needs of both current and future tenants. Further information about the event and consultation activities is provided below.

Tenancy Agreement Consultation

Thank you to everyone who responded to the tenancy agreement consultation in May, June and July. We received 14 responses by post and 23 through our online survey.

We are now reviewing your feedback. A full report will be published on our housing news webpage, and we will include a summary in the next edition of Housing Matters.

You can keep up to date with housing news, involvement opportunities and published outcome reports on our website: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-news.

Housing Income And Management Arrears Policy Consultation

As part of the review of the Housing Income and Arrears Management Policy, our involved tenants were invited to comment on the draft policy through a short survey in June. The consultation was also published on the Housing News page of our website and we received 38 responses.

Overall, the feedback was positive, with most respondents finding the policy clear and easy to understand. The main suggestions were to provide a clearer, simpler explanation of the rent arrears process and clearer information about who residents can contact if they need help.

The feedback did not identify any specific changes needed for the policy itself, but it did help to highlight an opportunity to improve how we explain the arrears process, so we have developed a simple rent arrears process guide. This will help residents understand what happens if rent arrears build up. You can view our rent arrears process guide on our webpage www.ashford.gov.uk/media/wzfl4zxv/rent-process-flow-chart.pdf.

Domestic Violence External Policy

We are pleased to announce that our new Domestic Abuse Policy has recently been approved by Cabinet.

Before finalising the policy, we carried out an online six-week public consultation to gather feedback from residents, partner organisations and stakeholders. This generated meaningful engagement with 185 total visits, 117 aware visitors, 46 informed visitors, and 18 engaged participants who completed the survey.

The responses received helped shape the final policy, highlighting the importance of accessible support, clear information about available services, and a coordinated approach to helping those affected by domestic abuse. The feedback has ensured that the policy reflects local needs and will help us provide effective support to residents experiencing



domestic abuse.

Hackfield Event:

Thank you to everyone who came out to talk to us at the Hackfield play area at the end of May and took part in the activities provided. We spoke with over 30 residents from the surrounding blocks, which helped identify some local neighbourhood improvements, including cutting back overgrown trees, which has now been completed. Concerns were also raised about matters managed by partner organisations, which we will continue to discuss with local residents in the area.

Empty Home (Void) And Relet Have Your Say Day: Tenant Update

In July, tenants joined colleagues from across the housing service to review and influence Ashford Borough Council's proposed Void and Relet Policy. The purpose of the session was to ensure the policy is clear, fair and transparent, helps tenants begin their tenancies successfully, and sets clear standards for how homes are prepared before being re-let.

The in-person event and online participation gave tenants the opportunity to learn more about the void and relet process, discuss performance, recharges, decoration standards, gifting of items, support for new tenants and the lettable standard expected when a property is offered to a new resident.

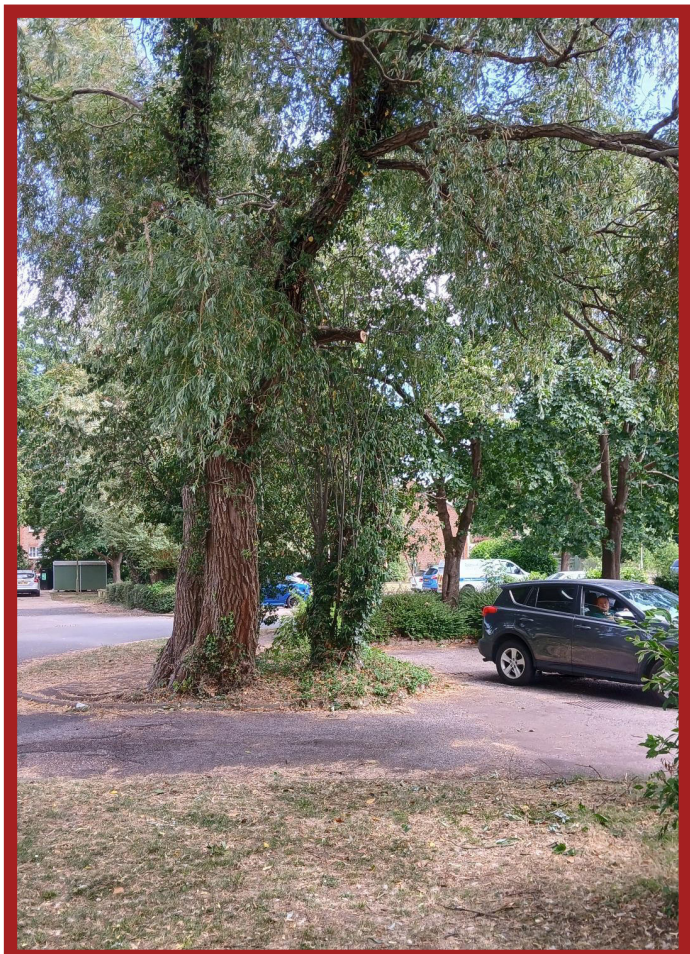
What Happens Next?

All feedback from the Have Your Say Day and online consultation has been reviewed. The draft policy has been updated to reflect tenant comments and recommendations wherever possible. The final step is to present this to cabinet for approval in early September. We will be publishing a full report online before the end of September.

We would like to thank everyone who took part. Your feedback is helping to shape how we prepare, inspect and re-let homes in the future, ensuring the service better reflects the needs and expectations of tenants.



You Said	We Did
"The low hanging trees over the car park for the block prevent people using the spaces, can the branches be cut back?"	Our General Maintenance Operatives attended the following Monday and cut back the trees
"The new defibrillator provided by the developers in Heathside, Appledore is locked with a key how can the public use it in an emergency"	Working with our tenants and the developer, the defibrillator has now been replaced with a new keypad-access model. In the event of an emergency, the access code can be obtained by contacting the emergency services.
"The rent arrears process is not clear enough in text format"	We have developed a simple rent arrears process guide which you can view on our webpage www.ashford.gov.uk/media/wzfl4zxv/rent-process-flow-chart.pdf Thank you to those who responded to the Income and Management Arrears Policy Consultation for this recommendation.
"You should be confirming our repairs appointment using our preferred contact method, and this should be asked when we raise a repair. "	We amended our form and our process. Our form now asks you for your preferred method of contact and we will use this to contact you about the next step for your repair request. Thank you to our Tenant Scrutiny Panel for making this recommendation as part of their ongoing investigation.



Tenant Scrutiny Update

Our scrutiny group continues to meet monthly, has now completed training from tenant engagement experts, TPAS, to help them with their scrutiny investigations. They have begun working on their first investigation:

“Are repairs responding to online forms within a reasonable timescale?”

As part of their review, the panel made a recommendation to improve the online repairs reporting form by adding a “Preferred Contact Method” field.

This will allow tenants to tell us how they would like to be contacted about their repair and aims to improve communication throughout the repairs process.

We look forward to receiving more recommendations as their investigation continues and once it is concluded, we will publish a full report.

We are still recruiting for tenant scrutineers to join the panel on the next investigation. If you are interested in finding out more, please visit our website or contact us using the details below.

www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement

Tenant Voice

Our tenant voice panel supports our housing service by responding to consultations and surveys from the comfort of their own homes, either by telephone, email or post. In the last six months, the tenant voice panel has worked to help us introduce; a mutual exchange policy, a managed move policy and review our allocations policy to make sure they reflect the needs of our tenants.

If you would like to find out more about these opportunities, visit our webpage at **www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement**, or you can call Kirsty on **01233 330700** or contact the tenant engagement team by email on **tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk**

Get Involved!

Sign up to become an involved tenant and tell us what you'd like to get involved in by completing our online form!

Share Your Experience, Shape Our Services

Help us improve support for people facing homelessness

We are reviewing the way we help people who might become homeless. More than ever before, we don't want to be alone in how we shape the future of our services for people who are at risk of losing their homes. If you have ever experienced one of the following, we need your help:

- Rough sleeping
- Getting a notice from a landlord or your parents
- Fleeing abuse
- Making a homelessness application

We need help from anyone who has experienced the above- regardless of being a family or a single person, you can get involved.

There are lots of things we need help with. Sometimes, this will be answering some questions about what we get wrong, and what we get right. We also need people to help with holding us to account and helping us come up with new ideas.

If you are interested in helping, please email dan.ford@ashford.gov.uk for more information.



We need you!

Our tenant newsletter is designed to keep you informed about housing services, community news, upcoming events, and opportunities to have your say.

There are lots of ways you can get involved, whether you have plenty of time to spare or just a few ideas to share.

Do you enjoy writing? You could contribute an article about a local community project, an event you've attended, a hobby you're passionate about, or something that has made a positive difference in your neighbourhood. We welcome a range of stories and perspectives from tenants across our communities.

If writing isn't your thing, there are still many ways to take part. You could help review future editions, suggest topics you'd like to see covered, share feedback on how the newsletter could be improved, or recommend activities and events that other tenants may find useful.

We're also interested in hearing from tenants who would like to be involved in the publishing process. This could include helping to shape content, reviewing articles for clarity, or giving ideas on how to make the newsletter more engaging and accessible for everyone.

Your feedback and contributions help ensure the newsletter remains relevant, useful, and representative of tenant voices.

If you'd like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you. Whether you have a story to tell, an idea to share, or simply want to help improve future editions, your contribution could make a real difference.

Together, we can create a newsletter that truly reflects our tenant community.

Contact us if you would like to get more involved. Call **01233 330700**
or email **tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk**



Introducing Our New Domestic Abuse Forum

We are launching a new Domestic Abuse Forum for tenants with lived experience of domestic abuse. The forum will provide a safe opportunity to share your views and help us understand how we can improve our housing services and support for those affected by domestic abuse.

If you are interested in taking part, would like more information, or would prefer to discuss the forum confidentially before attending, please contact the Tenant Engagement Team on **01233 330700** or email **tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk**.

Knowing You – Why We Are Updating Tenant Information

We have begun contacting all of our tenants to make sure the details we hold on our systems about them are up to date and accurate. This will ensure that we communicate and provide services to our tenants meeting all their needs and preferences and know when it is necessary to give tenants extra support if they need it. This is information that we will update each year moving forward. We will only ask for data that is required of us by the Regulator of Social Housing and that will help us to ensure that we can provide high quality housing services that meet your needs and those of your household members.

As at the middle of June, we have received 923 completed surveys, which equates to information for 1120 individuals (tenants and household members) being updated in our system. We are working towards collecting information from all our tenants over the coming months and remainder of this year.

We have designed a short survey for tenants to provide key pieces of information that we need; these include asking tenants to provide contact details about who is currently living as part of their household and also questions related to equality and diversity. If you haven't completed this survey, you can do so on our website:

www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-survey

If you are unable to complete the survey online, please contact us via the dedicated inbox **tenantsurvey@ashford.gov.uk** or contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer and we can either visit you in person, complete over the phone or send you a paper copy to complete and return.

Our website page sets out why we are collecting this information from you in more detail and includes a FAQ about the survey and the use of your data. If you don't want to answer all the survey questions there is the option to confirm that you 'prefer not to say', and this will be

recorded as your response within our system.

Coming this October, The Competence and Conduct Standard

From October, the Regulator of Social Housing is introducing new standards for landlords, aimed at improving professionalism within social housing. The Competency and Conduct Consumer Standard requires landlords to make sure their staff have the right skills, knowledge and behaviours when delivering services to tenants. This includes having specific policies and a code of conduct for staff and ensuring senior staff hold suitable housing qualifications.

In preparation for October, we have been listening to tenants' views on what they expect from our staff, and our contractors. We've really appreciated what tenants have been telling us and have developed this into our policy and code of conduct, which we're consulting on more widely with tenants. The final policy and the code of conduct will be available on our website so you can know what standards we should be meeting when we are delivering services to you.



Save Water, Save Energy, Save Money

Did you know that a simple water-saving device could help reduce your household water use without changing the way you use water every day?

We are working in partnership with Control Flow Technologies Group to install a water-saving device designed to reduce water consumption, improve efficiency and help lower utility bills. The devices work by regulating water flow and stabilising water pressure, helping water to be heated more efficiently while still providing a comfortable supply of water throughout your home.

One of the biggest myths about water-saving devices is that they will leave you with a weak shower or make everyday tasks take longer. In reality, the devices are designed to maintain a consistent flow while reducing unnecessary water waste. Many customers find that they notice little or no difference in their day-to-day use, other than potential savings on their bills. If there is an electric shower in your property please be assured that Control Flow will fit up to 4 flow reducing valves, hot and cold to the sink and basin. An initial test on the water pressure will be carried out, then they will consider the size of the property, number

of occupants, number of bathrooms and if there is a disabled adaption in place. Once all these checks have been carried out, they will decide to fit a valve to the main pipe bringing water into the house.

Another common concern is that installation will be disruptive. In most cases, a visit takes around 30 to 45 minutes, and while in your home the engineer will carry out a free Water Audit (sometimes called a Water MOT). This includes checking for minor leaks and fixing them where possible, helping to improve efficiency even further. All engineers carry identification and will only install a device if it is suitable for your property.

By using less water, you can also reduce the energy needed to heat and pump it around your home. This means lower demand on local water resources and a positive impact on the environment. Some estimates suggest households could save up to £360 per year on combined water and energy costs.

A small device can make a big difference, helping you save water, save energy and support a more sustainable future.

Recycling

Recycling – let's make sure we get it right.

We know most of you get it right when it comes to recycling. However, contamination is a real issue and has become much more noticeable over the last few months.

Stopping that starts at home. More often than not, people will contaminate their bins by accident or because they aren't fully aware of what they're doing.

This has a knock-on effect. When a crew spots contamination in bins, they are told to leave it. If they pick it up, the whole load can become contaminated and has to be sent to incineration.

As such, we can't stress enough that you should only put in things that we can recycle. This includes:

- Paper, magazines, cardboard
- Plastic bottles and tubs (including toothpaste tubes)

- Glass bottles and jars
- Metal cans

Please make sure everything is clean, as food waste is our biggest contaminant.

It's especially important that you recycle properly if you share a bin. Contaminated larger bins are causing real issues for residents.

Please empty recycling into the bin loose and not in bags. The bags can't be recycled, so please put any bags you've emptied into the refuse bin.

Help us put an end to contamination by doing your bit at home.

To find out more about waste, or to order a food caddy, visit

www.ashford.gov.uk/recycling-waste-and-bins



Independent Living Highlights

Cotton Hill House Turns 50!

Residents, staff, friends and local councillors came together on 19 June 2026 to celebrate 50 years of Cotton Hill House, which first opened in April 1976.

The event was filled with memories of life in the 1970s, including stories shared by Julia and Maggie, daughters of Cotton Hill's first warden, Audrey Robinson. Guests also enjoyed hearing the legend of "Old Fred", the farmer who once owned the land and is said to still haunt the building.

The Worshipful Mayor of Ashford, Cllr Winston Michael, unveiled a commemorative plaque and recognised residents, June McKay, for her dedication to Cotton Hill, while Jane Sparkes was thanked for her support of fellow residents.

The celebrations ended with a traditional afternoon tea, complete with a classic 1970s cheese and pineapple hedgehog.



Telecare And Door Entry System Upgrades At Independent Living Schemes

Ashford Borough Council has appointed Careium Ltd via the Procurement for Housing Framework to deliver upgrades to lifeline and door entry systems across its Independent Living Schemes.

The programme includes the removal of existing lifelines, door entry systems, smoke alarms and heat detectors, and the installation of new Eliza dispersed lifelines, digital door entry systems and new smoke and heat detectors.

We're pleased to report that works have already been completed at two Independent Living Schemes, Cotton Hill House and Askes Court. The programme will continue throughout the year, with the remaining schemes scheduled to receive their upgrades in the coming months.

There will be a Q&A session with a senior representative from Careium at each scheme before works commence. Independent living residents will receive a letter informing them of the date and time of the Q & A session.

These improvements will help ensure residents benefit from modern, reliable technology that supports their safety, security and independence in their homes.

If you have any questions, please contact Anthony Crossley on **01233 330464**.

Ashford in Bloom 2026

Judging for this year's Dahlia Garden Competition took place at the beginning of June, with Jo Fox, Assistant Director of Housing, and Andy Richardson from Uprising visiting schemes.

The competition once again showcased an impressive range of creativity, colour and community spirit across all categories. Congratulations to all our winners and runners-up for their hard work and dedication in creating such beautiful spaces.

Balcony Category:

Winner: Pam for creating a vibrant and welcoming balcony display.

Runner-up: Valerie for her colourful planting and attractive raised beds.



Indoor plant category:

A resident from Farrow Court impressed the judges with an exceptional Peace Lily, described as one of the finest examples they had ever seen.

Private Garden Category:

Winners: Graham and Julie for their beautifully maintained garden and creative use of recycled planters.

Runners-up: Claire and Dave for their stunning and well-kept front and back gardens.

Communal Garden Category:

Winner: Baxendale, praised for transforming a small area into a peaceful and welcoming communal garden.

Runner-up: Danemore, recognised for its impressive garden transformation, featuring everything from vegetables to ornamental displays and reflecting the dedication of residents.

A huge well done to everyone who participated.

Dahlia Summer BBQ

The Independent Living Summer BBQ at Luckley House on Friday 3 July was a tremendous success, bringing tenants and staff together for an afternoon of food, entertainment and celebration. With sunshine throughout the day, guests were able to enjoy the beautifully decorated gardens, complete with bunting, balloons and gazebos that created a warm and welcoming atmosphere.



Having entertainers proved a real highlight with tenants singing, dancing and joining in the fun. The raffle, tombola and craft stall added to the lively atmosphere, while the announcement of the Garden Competition awards celebrated the hard work and pride tenants put into their gardens.

The event was made possible thanks to the dedication of the General Maintenance Operatives and ILOs, who prepared, cooked and served the BBQ while ensuring everyone felt included and well supported. Thoughtful touches such as arranged transport and a surprise visit from an ice-cream van were especially appreciated.

Feedback from tenants has been overwhelmingly positive. Residents from Monypenny and Baxendale praised staff for creating a joyful, well organised event that made everyone feel valued.

The day showcased the powerful impact of shared activities in reducing isolation, encouraging engagement and strengthening the sense of belonging across the schemes.

Keeping Homes Safe

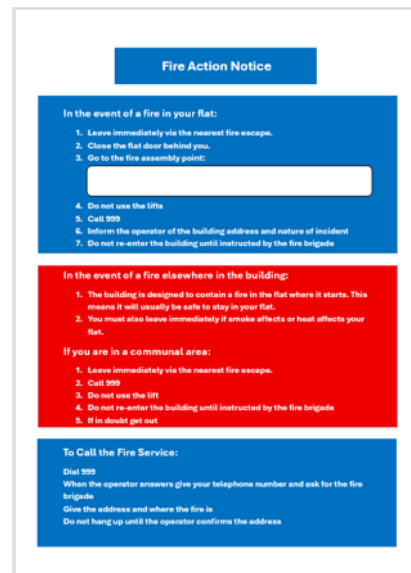
Important Fire Safety Information

Your safety is our top priority. We're writing to you to make sure you know what to do if there's a fire where you live.

What Should You Do If There's A Fire?

It is important to familiarise yourself with the Fire Action Notice for your building; this will either be Stay Put or Full Evacuation. The example to the right is a Stay Put Fire Action Notice. Fire action notices are normally displayed on the wall at the front and rear exits of your building.

Check you understand it and know what to do. Tell us if you might have problems following or understanding these instructions. Let us know if your notice is missing, damaged or defaced. Contact us at abcfiresafety@ashford.gov.uk or call **01233 331111**.



Fire Doors

Flat entrance doors form an integral part of maintaining fire safety for your flat and the block. Flat Fire Doors have 2 main functions:

- To prevent the spread of fire from the communal area to the flat.
- To prevent a fire within the flat from spreading to the communal areas of the block

The doors are to stop a fire in the communal areas of a block spreading into a flat where residents may be sheltering until the fire and rescue service arrives

Communal fire doors operate in the same way to prevent fire from spreading throughout the building and to keep you safe.

How You Can Help

- Keep fire doors closed when not in use.
- Never tamper with or wedge fire doors open.
- Report any damage or faults to us as soon as you spot them.



Checking Of Your Flat Front Door

We carry out routine inspections of fire doors in all our schemes and in residential blocks that are 11 metres or higher. To help keep residents safe, communal fire doors are inspected every three months, while flat entrance doors are checked annually to ensure they remain in good working order and continue to provide effective fire protection.

If you're concerned about your fire door, you can complete the following checks as well as contacting us at abcfiresafety@ashford.gov.uk or call **01233 331111**

- Does it close by itself?
To make sure the self-closing device at the top of your front door is working properly, open the door to about a 45 degrees and let the door close. The door should close flush to the frame.
- Are the fire seals present and secure?
Check around the edges of the door and frame for plastic or brush-like strips. These seals help to restrict the spread of fire.
- Is the door in good condition?
Ensure the door closes fully and sits properly within the frame, with no signs of damage such as cracks, gaps, or holes.

Fire Safety In Your Home

Fire safety in the home is important because a fire can start and spread very quickly, putting lives, homes and belongings at risk. Simple steps such as fitting and testing smoke alarms, keeping escape routes clear, using electrical items safely and taking care when cooking can help prevent fires from starting and give everyone more time to react if there is an emergency. Knowing what to do before a fire happens can make a real difference and helps keep you, your family and your neighbours safe.

What actions can you take to prepare and prevent the possibility of a fire.

- Do not remove fire detection within your property; you are 11 times more likely to be harmed in a fire if you do not have any smoke alarms in your home.
- Plan and practise an escape route and make sure everyone knows what to do in an emergency and how to escape.
- Keep flammable items (such as loose clothing, tea towels and kitchen roll) away from the cooker.
- Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully – put them out, right out.
- Do not overload plug sockets and look for signs of dangerous or loose wiring.
- Keep portable heaters clear from curtains and furniture and never use them to dry clothes.
- Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire – like curtains.

You are more at risk from a fire when asleep so it's a good idea to check your home before you go to bed. You should:

- Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on – like your freezer
- Check your cooker is turned off
- Do not leave the washing machine or dryer on
- Turn heaters off and put up fireguards
- Put candles and cigarettes out properly
- Make sure exits and exit routes are kept clear
- Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them

If you need any advice regarding fire safety in your home Kent Fire and Rescue Service offers a free service where firefighters or safety officers visit your home to identify fire risks, install smoke or carbon monoxide alarms and help you create a personalized escape plan. To book a visit please go to:

www.kent.fire-uk.org/hfsv

If you are unsure or have any concerns, get in contact with us at abcfiresafety@ashford.gov.uk or call **01233 331111**.

Stock Condition Surveys

We are restarting our Stock Condition Survey Programme as part of a rolling five-year programme, with surveys now being carried out by our own trained inspectors.

These surveys help us understand the condition of our homes and plan future improvements. During the visit, we will carry out a visual inspection of key areas such as windows, doors, kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems and any external elements. We will also look for issues such as damp and mould, health and safety concerns, and anything that may affect the wellbeing of our residents.

The information collected helps us plan maintenance and replacement programmes, ensuring investment is targeted where it is needed most and helping us maintain safe, quality homes.

The survey usually takes less than an hour, and photographs may be taken to accurately record the condition of your home. If you are due to have an inspection, we will contact you by letter or telephone.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour?

Anti-Social Behaviour Is:

- Conduct that has caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any person
- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
- Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person

Confused about Antisocial Behaviour

Find out more about what is and is not classed as Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) and find out who you can contact when you need to

ASB	Not ASB
Persistent noise nuisance	Smells from cooking
Rowdy behaviour and drunkenness	A one-off party
Jamming open communal doors	Children playing
Uncontrollable pets	Dirty looks
Throwing things from windows or balconies	Crying Children
Street drinking	DIY during reasonable times of the day
Graffiti	Occasional dog barking
Dumping rubbish / Fly tipping	Overgrown gardens
Damage to property or plants	Usual household noises (eg doors closing, vacuuming or using the washing machine)
Intimidation and harassment	
Malicious communications	
Hate incidents and crime	

All Incidents of a criminal nature must be reported to Kent Police direct, for example, drug dealing. Kent Police are the lead response and investigatory service for criminal offences. This can be done by calling their 101 number or by using their Online Reporting Form: <https://www.kent.police.uk/ro/report/> .

If you want to report a crime but remain anonymous, you can report the incident to Crime Stoppers by calling **0800 55111** or online:

crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously

Don't let antisocial behaviour get out of control. If you are struggling with alarming behaviour from your neighbours or struggling to manage your tenancy, please contact us for help as soon as possible. Reporting each incident as and when they occur, providing details of the incident and how it has affected you and/or the community. If you have evidence of the incident, such as noise recordings, video recordings and CCTV doorbell footage please provide this to us, to help investigate incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Report antisocial behaviour online at **www.ashford.gov.uk/community-safety** or by phone on **01233 331111**.

Delivering New Council Homes Across the Borough

Ashford Borough Council remains committed to its ambitious target of delivering 1,000 new council homes to help meet local housing needs and provide high-quality, affordable places for residents to live.

Good progress is being made across a range of development projects. At Oakleigh House in Ashford, the council is delivering 59 new homes, comprising 54 independent retirement living homes and five homes for people with learning disabilities. This development will provide much-needed specialist accommodation, helping residents live independently within their local community.

At Mabledon Avenue, Ashford, work is progressing on 20 new council homes. The development will include a mix of one, two and three-bedroom properties, all designed to be highly energy efficient, helping to reduce both carbon emissions and residents' energy bills.

In addition to building its own homes, the council is increasing the supply of affordable housing through acquisitions from private developers. At Harmers Way, Egerton, the council is purchasing five homes, including three for affordable rent and two for shared ownership. At Front Road, Woodchurch, a further 16 homes will be acquired, comprising nine for affordable rent and seven for shared ownership.

Looking ahead, the council has recently submitted planning applications for two significant affordable housing schemes within Ashford town centre. These include the Tanyard development, which will deliver 160 new homes, and the conversion of the former Civic Centre into 60 new apartments.

Planning applications have also been submitted for two further schemes: 27 new homes at Repton Park and 28 new homes at Coneybeare.

Together, these developments represent a major investment in Ashford's future, providing a wide range of affordable, accessible and energy-efficient homes for local people while supporting the council's goal of delivering 1,000 new council homes.



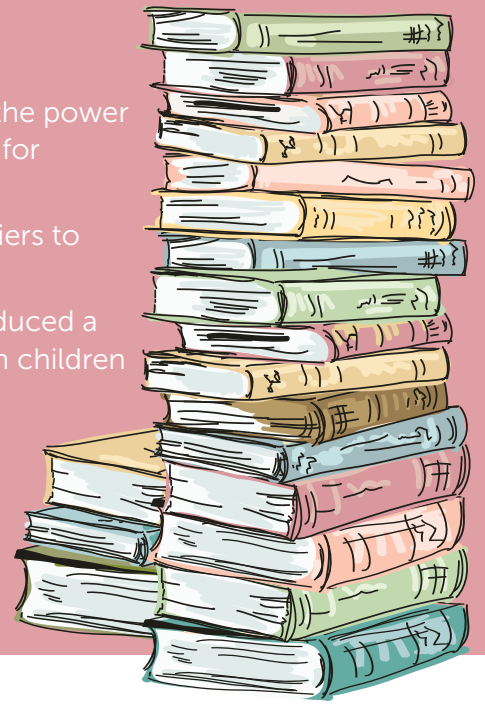
Free Book Bank

This year is the National Year of Reading, a nationwide celebration of the power of reading to support learning, wellbeing and opportunity - especially for children and families.

As a council, we are proud to support initiatives that help remove barriers to reading and encourage a lifelong love of books.

As part of our support for the National Year of Reading, we have introduced a 'Book Bank' in the reception area of International House aimed at both children and adults.

The books will be suitable for a range of ages and reading levels, helping to support families who may not always have easy access to books at home as they can help themselves **free of charge**. To find out more, please visit: www.ashford.gov.uk/book-bank



A Message From Our Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator

If you, or a friend or relative, is suffering from domestic abuse, it's important to tell someone. Domestic abuse can include any of the below:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Harassment or threats
- Financial control
- Shouting at you (including in front of children)
- Stalking you
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour

The Housing Team takes all reports of domestic violence seriously. We are currently working to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation. We will update you on this in upcoming newsletters.

The following local services offer advice and support:

Ashford Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop held every Tuesday. For more information:

☎ 07827 308231

✉ Domestic.AbuseCoordinator@ashford.gov.uk

Victim Support: ☎ 0808 168 9276

✉ kent.da@victimsupport.cjsm.net

Rising Sun Domestic Violence & Abuse Service:

☎ 01227 452852 ✉ referrals@risingsunkent.com

Clarion Domestic Abuse Support Line:

☎ 07376 637069 ✉ centrakent@centragroup.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline: ☎ 0808 200 0247

Useful Contacts

Report repairs or damp/mould: www.ashford.gov.uk/report-a-repair or call 01233 330366

Raise a complaint: www.ashford.gov.uk/complaints or call 01233 331111

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer or call 01233 330688

Housing help and advice: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-help

Welfare Intervention Team: www.ashford.gov.uk/welfare-reform or call 01233 331111

Tenant Engagement Team: www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement or call 01233 330700