



HOUSING REPORT

Annual Report to Tenants 2024-2025



Hello

Welcome to the annual tenants' housing report, where we let you know about our performance across the past financial year - April 2024 to March 2025. The report provides key facts and figures about your housing service and gives an overview of what the team has been up to over the year.

Our housing service is now led by Jo Fox, a housing professional who has more than 20 years' experience of working in the industry. Jo said: "Ashford's landlord services are on an exciting transformational journey and I'm delighted to be a part of that. My role is to ensure that we take these improvements to the next level, and to provide housing services that we can all be proud of.

"My mission is to make sure that our tenants are at the heart of everything we do and I'm looking forward to achieving that with the help of our hard-working and dedicated staff in Ashford's housing service."

We aim to be transparent and open with you about our work so that you can challenge and hold us to account. This year we have focused on keeping you informed about the things that matter to you, and asking your views on how we can improve. Our tenant satisfaction survey asked you what you thought about our services and the results can be seen on page 11.

We have been honest with you about our self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing as we felt that our IT systems and knowledge of our housing stock were not good enough. We have now put systems in place to address these areas including a comprehensive stock condition survey.

The past year has been challenging for tenants and us alike. The continued rise in costs has been difficult for many residents and our welfare team and housing officers have been there to support you along the way.

We hope you find this report interesting.

If you have any thoughts please email tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk – we would love to have you more involved in scrutinising our work so that we can learn from you. If you are interested in finding out more about this please get in touch.

The Housing Team

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Our Property Portfolio

As at 31 March 2024, our total housing stock was 5,247 homes.

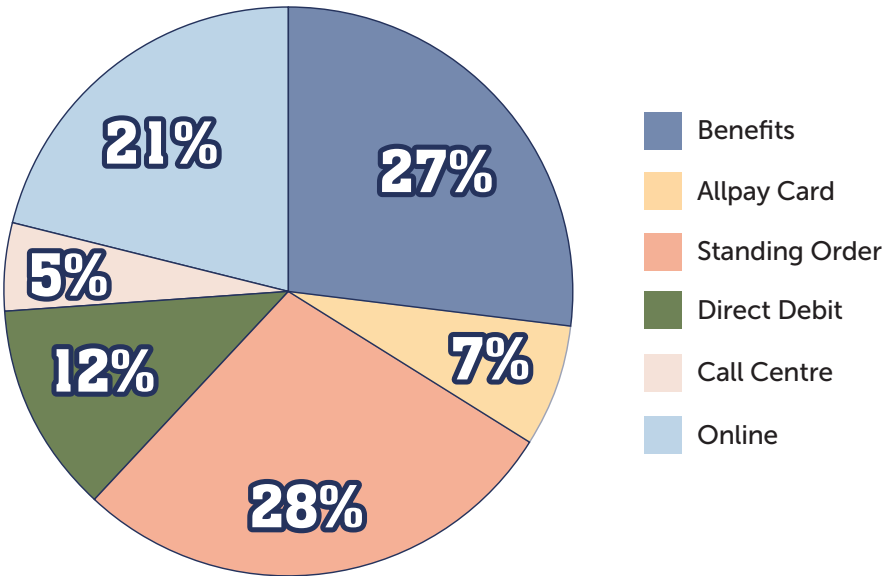
Rent values

In 2024/25 we collected 101.15% of rent that was due. During this period there were six evictions for rent arrears.

Weekly rent comparison 2022/23

	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
Social Rent	£101.47	£116.23	£131.01	£138.98
Affordable Rent	£147.98	£162.65	£193.61	£237.21
Average Private Rent	£230.54	£294.00	£361.62	£457.62

How rents are paid



We are seeing a lot more rental payments being made online, allowing you to pay at a time convenient to you from the comfort of your own home or when you are out and about via smartphone. Aside from paying via our website, you can also pay via the Tenants Portal as well as check your rent account balance www.ashford.gov.uk/tenants-portal

Direct debits are also a simple and easy way to arrange recurring payments. You can set up a direct debit to pay your rent and you will have peace of mind that it will always be paid on time directly from your bank account straight to us.

Remember if you are ever concerned about making rent payments or have any questions or queries about them, contact your Housing Officer that deals with rents www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer





Repairs and maintenance

£10.4m



Supervision and management admin

£7.2m



Loan repayment and interest charges

£8.1m



Contribution to planned maintenance and new build programmes

£7.9m



Transfer to reserves

£0.6m

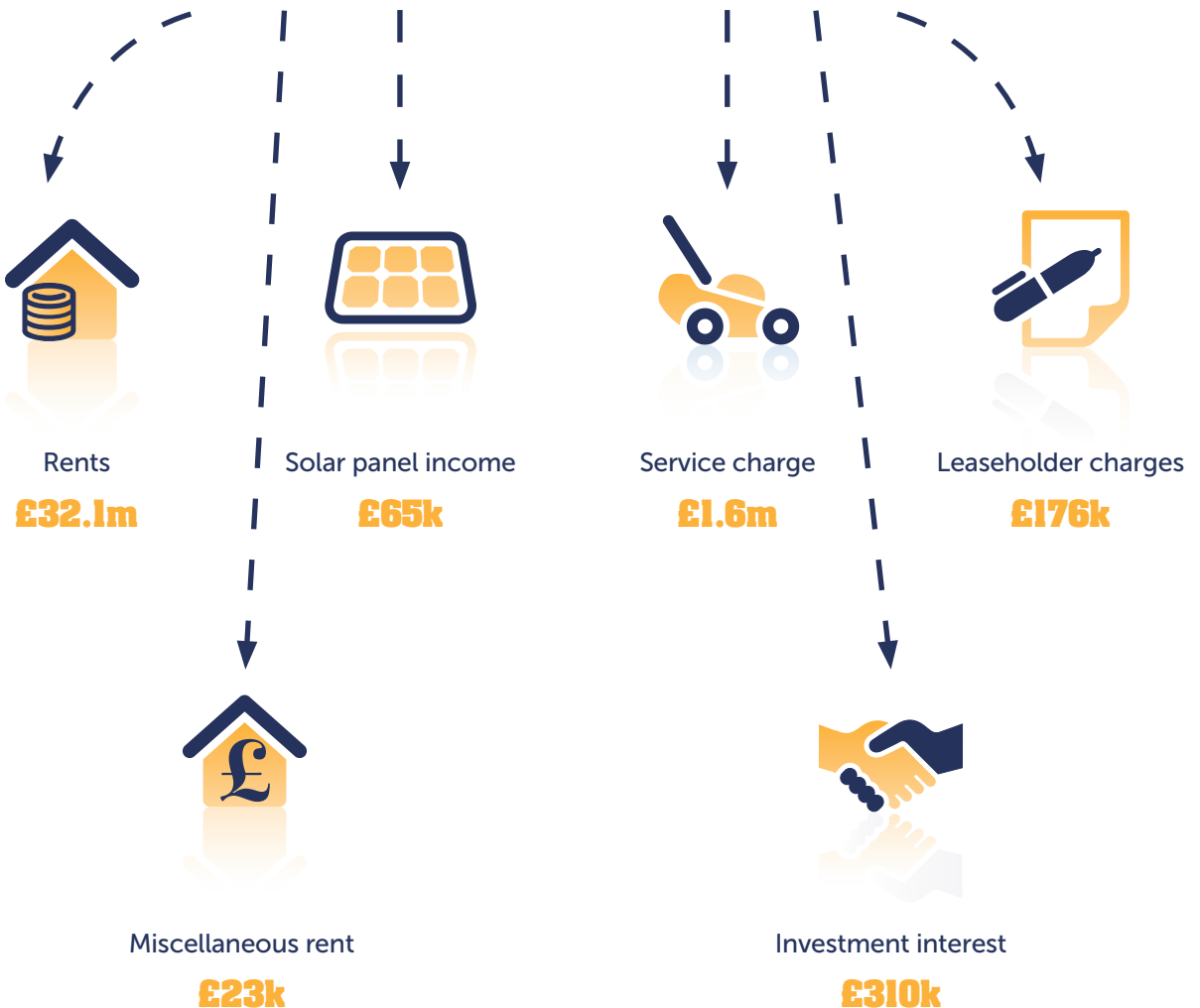


HRA - EXPENDITURE

(Total - £33.6m)

HRA - INCOME

(Total - 34.874)



Repairs, adaptations and improvements



Total number of completed repairs

15,309

Total cost of repairs

£10.1m

Average cost of repairs

£707.43



Quantity of emergency repairs

1,794

Cost of emergency repairs

£197k



Number of voids (empty properties)

307

Number of void repair jobs

500

Cost of void property repairs

£2.33m

Average void time

38 days

Rent lost due to voids

£179k



Number of disabled adaptations

201

Cost of disabled adaptations

£420.4k



Cost breakdowns:

New kitchens

£1.3m

New bathrooms

£499k

New boilers/heating

£569k

Your safety is our priority

We require access to homes to carry out essential checks and servicing of equipment. Annual gas servicing of heating systems takes place across summer months to ensure your heating is in good working order and safe, ready for the winter months. It is also essential that gas appliances that are not used for heating have safety checks too. We will arrange for appliances owned by the council to have annual checks, however for appliances owned by tenants they are responsible for these safety checks. Portable gas heaters are strictly prohibited due to risk of combustion.

Other important safety checks we carry out as part of our compliance processes are five-yearly electrical checks as well as lift, asbestos, fire and water quality safety checks.

We have a strict policy regarding access for safety. We have sought warrants where access has been denied to ensure compliance. It is a legal requirement for these checks to be undertaken and access must therefore be granted in accordance with that.

For more information regarding safety in the home www.ashford.gov.uk/living-safely-in-your-home

Ways of reporting repairs: 01233 330336 or www.ashford.gov.uk/report-repairs

Our partners are ABC Electrical Services, Sureserve Compliance South, Aspire, Calibre



Lettings

The total number of households on the housing register at March 2024 was 1,523.

Total number of properties available for letting

Bedroom need	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
1	352	229	165	138
2	200	158	155	120
3	81	58	67	42
4	9	14	6	14
5 plus	4	0	0	3
Total	646	458	393	317

Percentage of units allocated to each category on the housing register

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Homeless	18%	31%	50%	14%
Homeseeker	50%	45%	26%	54%
Transfer	32%	24%	24%	32%

Voids

	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	March 2025
Number of days to turnaround a void	30	19	24	55

Lettings and allocations policy

The Housing Lettings Policy, which sets out how social rented housing is allocated, was open to consultation in early 2025. We asked tenants for their views about how we allocate homes on the Housing Register. The feedback regarding this was clear that improvements were needed to make our policies fairer to meet the needs of our community. The new Allocation Scheme is being heard at cabinet in late 2025 and is anticipated to launch in April 2026. This will provide more importance on waiting time alongside housing need when bidding, so that all tenants in housing need can be considered for accommodation, taking into account waiting time.

Applying to the housing register

If you cannot afford your own home, or your current home does not meet your requirements, then you may wish to apply to join the council's housing register. Please note that means testing and local connection criteria may apply. You can apply for social rented housing within the borough by completing our online application form. The form is available on the Kent Homechoice website www.kenthomechoice.org.uk

Once you have submitted your form and documents, it can take up to eight weeks for us to make an assessment of your application. We will then contact you and provide details of your application priority and how you can express an interest in available properties.

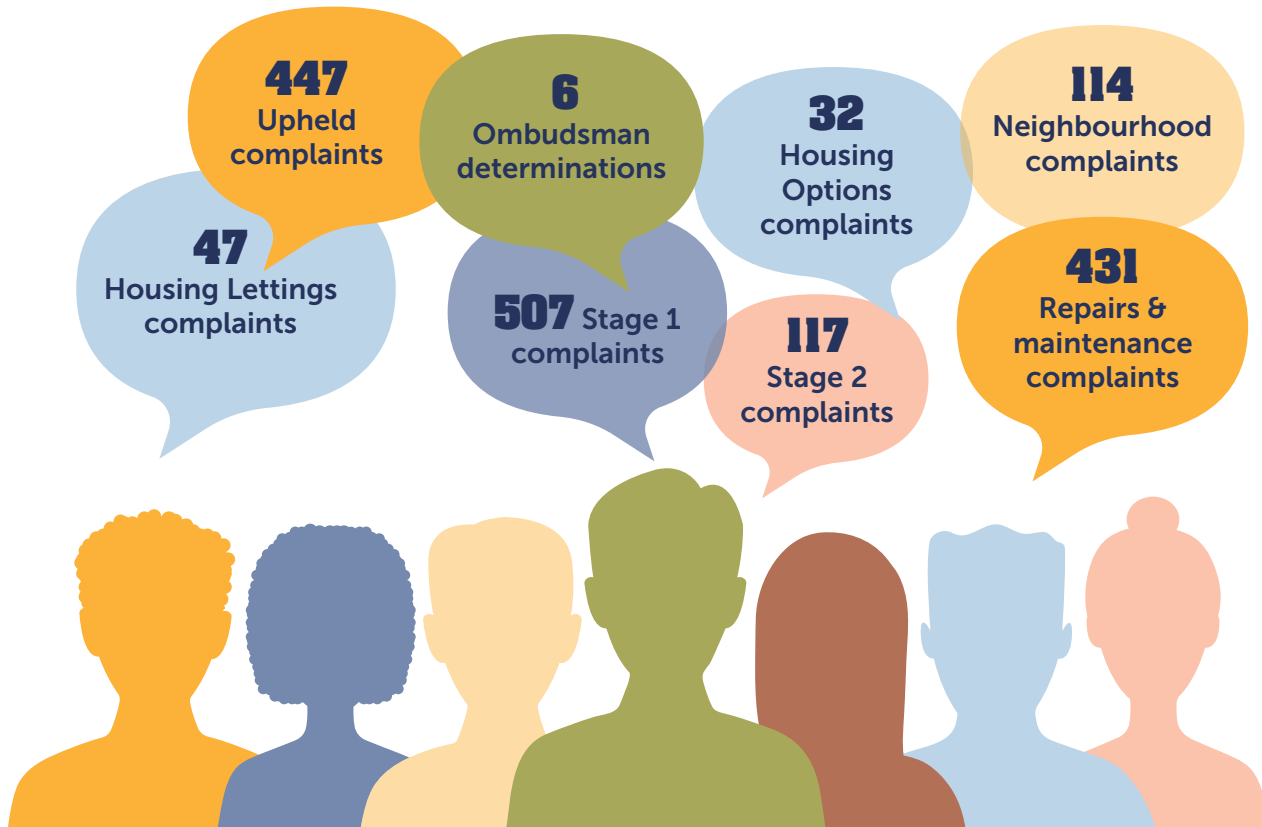
Unfortunately, we have a large number of people on our housing register compared to the number of available properties to let. Depending on your assessed priority banding, some people may have to wait many years before being offered a property. We would advise you to complete our new advice tool on the website ashford.adviceaid.uk/start.

Housing Advice Contact Details

Phone: 01233 331111

Email: housing.advice@Ashford.gov.uk

Complaints



Complaints

Ashford Borough Council's Housing Department is committed to providing excellent housing services and aims to give the best customer service possible. If we have failed to provide a service, or a tenant is dissatisfied with the way in which a service has been provided by the Housing team (or by contractors providing a service on behalf of the council), we want to know about it. In most cases we hope and will strive to resolve problems with the member of staff you dealt with in a quick and efficient manner. We will also use your feedback to help us make improvements. Where this is not possible, we have a formal complaints process to fully consider your complaint.

We will look into the issue, provide an explanation and an apology (where it is appropriate to do so) with a view to improving our services. We will aim to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

You can complain about things like:

- Delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Standards of our services
- Our failure to follow proper procedure
- Unreasonable behaviour by an officer

What can't I complain about?

We will not treat certain issues as complaints and where this is the case, we will tell you by setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. Some failures of service will be dealt with outside of the complaints process and will be considered a service request.

How do I complain?

You can make a complaint by:

- Completing a web form at: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-complaints-procedure
- Email us at: complaints@ashford.gov.uk
- Telephone by calling: **01233 330688**
- Writing/visiting: Ashford Borough Council, Tannery Lane, Ashford, TN23 1PL
- Social media:



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Post @AshfordCouncil

Housing Ombudsman Service

If you are not satisfied with how we have handled your complaint then you can complain directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted at any stage of the complaint process for advice and information.

The Housing Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint. They will usually only consider a complaint after it has been through our complaints procedure as they expect you to bring your concerns to our attention first and give us a chance to put things right.

The Housing Ombudsman Service:

Tel: **0300 111 3000**

Email: info@housingombudsman.org.uk

Postal address: Housing Ombudsman, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

More information can be found at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Neighbourhood services



Events – Colleagues from the Neighbourhood Services Team, along with Welfare Intervention Officers and our Repairs Service have been attending Eat Well Spend Less events across the Borough of Ashford. These events provide the opportunity for all members of local communities to have access to advice, support and signposting to over 25 organisations. Details about these events are regularly published on the Ashford Borough council website - **Information on the Eat Well Spend Less and Wellbeing Roadshows organised by Ashford Borough Council.**

Communal areas – There is a continued focus on keeping all communal areas clear. This is to ensure that we keep all residents in our flatted accommodation safe, meeting legal obligations around fire safety. Our blocks are visited on a regular basis by several colleagues. Items found to be stored in the communal areas will be ticketed and removed with appropriate notice. We hope that tenants will continue to work with us in keeping these areas clear.

Estate inspections – These inspections are now taking place on a fortnightly basis. All details about the areas and meeting points for tenants to join the estate inspections are published on our website and in our quarterly tenant's newsletter, Housing Matters. The inspections are attended by Neighbourhood Housing Officers, Tenant Engagement Officers and Repairs Operatives. During any inspection, a variety of issues are routinely identified and reported, including any repairs to communal areas or housing owned land or roads, fly tipping and maintenance or replacement of equipment on housing owned play areas. We also now offer a door knock for tenants who wish to participate in an inspection but are not able to, details about this found on our website. **Tenant Engagement homepage for tenants to find out how to get involved in our housing services.**

Neighbourhood Housing Officers – We now have six Neighbourhood Housing Officers responsible for delivering services to tenants in relation to tenancy and estate matters. There are four who are responsible for rent income and arrears collection. Each area across the Borough now has a dedicated email inbox for tenancy issues and another for rent queries. All details about how to identify the correct email and phone contact for you can be found on our website. **Find out who your Neighbourhood Housing Officer is and how you can contact them.**

Mutual exchanges – Within the last year 41 mutual exchanges have taken place. Timeframes about how long this process takes are set in legislation. For more information about how to mutually exchange please visit - **Information on how to find and carry out a mutual exchange.**

Downsizing – we continue to offer downsizing packages to tenants that are occupying family-sized accommodation who would like to move to smaller properties. By freeing up larger properties it helps those waiting on the housing list as well as saving those downsizing from paying spare room penalties. Those that wish to downsize could receive a financial reward, support with removal costs and assistance to help find the right property. Five households have benefitted from this scheme this past year. For more information and details of eligibility visit our website www.ashford.gov.uk/downsizing.

General Maintenance Officers – There are two General Maintenance Officers working for the Neighbourhood Housing Service, helping with tasks such as keeping our communal areas clear of obstructions, maintaining our play areas, assisting with basic DIY jobs where tenants are unable to physically do these works themselves. They are also undertaking regular inspections of our communal areas, including meter readings and reporting repairs.

Tenants Portal – The portal offers a quick and easy way for tenants to check rent account balances, look at payment history, update contact and personal information, and it is also a good way to report repairs. We are exploring an 'opt out' for the portal, so unless you decide to opt out all new tenants will be registered to use the portal from the beginning of their tenancy, more details on this will be shared on our website and via our Housing Matters Newsletter. To access the portal requires a registration, please visit. To do this please visit - [Find out about our tenants portal where you can check your balance, making payments, report repairs and update your details.](#)

Independent Living Schemes – We opened up a number of our Independent Living Schemes across the winter period to offer a 'warm space' for local residents. An opportunity to have a somewhere warm to meet with local people, combat isolation and meet new people.

Our Independent Living Officers have all obtained Chartered institute of Environmental Health certificates for preparation of food in a commercial setting. This assists with them being able to facilitate regular events and meetings that include cooking and provision of food.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – We are continuously working to improve our handling of reports of ASB, including partnership working with other agencies. There has been a programme of training for our Neighbourhood Housing Officers and the introduction of a new case management system to help monitor and manage all cases that are reported.

We have introduced a monthly drop-in for tenants at International House, the first Wednesday of each month, where tenants can attend without an appointment to get advice or report ASB concerns. Additional opportunities to meet with a Neighbourhood Housing Officer in person within local communities will be available soon.

For more information about ASB please visit - [Information regarding anti-social behaviour and Ashford Borough Council's approach to its enforcement.](#)

Statistics

The council had **120 Active Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)** cases at the end of March 2025.

- 4** Notices of Seeking Possession were issued to tenants for ASB
- 11** cases were referred to mediation from the whole housing service
- 72** Community Protection Warnings were issued to tenants
- 4** Community Protection Notices were issued to tenants
- 1** Partial Closure Order
- 0** Eviction due to ASB



Tenant Engagement

During the past year, we have ramped up our opportunities for tenants to have their say and get involved. The valuable feedback collected is being used to shape the improvements to our services and changes as a result of the consumer standards.

Listening to tenants

Tenants have been providing us with incredibly valuable feedback this year. Feedback came in every form, from our formal annual satisfaction survey, to participating with us informally when you see us in person. This feedback has been used to make improvements to our service and allows us to make sure you can access our services. Thank you to everyone who got involved to report your concerns and share your ideas and requests.

You said, we did

Shaped by your feedback, a variety of involvement options have been implemented to facilitate tenant influence in our housing services. We have also introduced housing surgeries, and resident service days to increase opportunities to tackle common concerns and promote face-to-face contact.

Keeping you informed

We have continued to update you using our housing matters newsletter. We have changed the format of the newsletter, and will no longer be providing this quarterly but will deliver them to you as often as we have important news to report. We are no longer posting the newsletter out to tenants who have not explicitly requested this. Please let us know if you would like us to send this to you directly, either by post or by email, by completing our online form online at www.ashford.gov.uk/housingmatters-signup. Alternatively you can contact us using the details on this page.

Involving tenants

This year, we began recruiting for our tenant scrutiny panel, tenant voice panel and have been inviting tenants to get involved in our estate walkabout programme.



Tenant scrutiny panel

Our tenant scrutiny panel meet in person to investigate our housing performance and make improvement recommendations.



Tenant voice group

Our tenant voice group provide feedback by answering online or postal surveys on a regular basis.



Join the estate walkabout

We visit different parts of the borough conducting estate walkabouts and welcome tenants to join us or request a knock at their door on route.

To find out more

Visit our website:

www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement

Email us using: tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk

Request a phone call from the tenant engagement team by calling: **01233 331111**



Tenant satisfaction

We conducted our second tenant satisfaction survey for eight weeks throughout August, September and October 2024. We analysed your feedback and compiled an improvement action plan to tackle common reasons tenants reported which lead to their dissatisfaction



59% are satisfied with the overall service provided by Ashford Borough Council.



60% are satisfied with how informed they were



62% are satisfied with the repairs service



60% are satisfied they are treated fairly and with respect



53% are satisfied with the time taken on repair



25% are satisfied with our approach to complaint handling



61% are satisfied that their home is well maintained



56% are satisfied their communal areas are kept clean



69% are satisfied with the safety of their home



50% are satisfied with the positive contribution to their neighbourhood



45% are satisfied that we have listened and acted upon their views



48% are satisfied with how we handle Antisocial behaviour

To find out more about the action plan developed using the feedback from this survey, visit our website at www.ashford.gov.uk/TSM-year-two

Contacts

Ashford Borough Council Housing:

Neighbourhood & Rent	01233 330688 www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer
Repairs	01233 330366 (including out of hours) www.ashford.gov.uk/report-repairs
Complaints	01233 331111 or complaints@ashford.gov.uk
Damp & mould issues	damphelp@ashford.gov.uk
Sureserve Compliance South (formerly known as Swale Heating)	0800 206 1371 (free from landlines) or 01795 477098 for heating and hot water systems
Benefits & Welfare support	welfare@ashford.gov.uk

Others:

Housing Ombudsman Service:
PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ
Website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 111 3000
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Kent County Council:
County Hall, Maidstone ME14 1XQ
Website at: www.kent.gov.uk
Telephone: 03000 41 41 41

Citizen's Advice:
Seabrooke House, Church Road, Ashford TN23 1RD
Website at: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Telephone: 01233 626185
Email: ashfordadvice@gmail.com

Help from the Government:

Find out what support you might be able to get to help with your living costs
www.gov.uk/browse/benefits

