

Summer
2024

Housing Matters.

for Medway Council
tenants & leaseholders



SPECIAL SUMMER EDITION

Repairs and Maintenance Contract Awards

medway.gov.uk/Housing

Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You

Welcome to the special summer edition of Housing Matters



**Hello, I'm Becs Wilcox,
Chief Housing Officer.**

I am delighted to announce that the three main Repairs and Maintenance contracts have been awarded to Mears Group Plc for responsive repairs, planned works upgrades (such as kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows and roofs) and voids refurbishments; RGE Services for electrical tests, smoke detector upgrades and rewires; and Swale Heating for annual gas services and central heating/boiler breakdowns; for potentially, the next 12 years.

Procurement for contracts such as Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) (continuing with STG), Water Management, FRA Servicing, FRA Remedial Works, Asbestos Surveying and Asbestos Remedial Works also took place with the successful contractors yet to be formally announced.

The retender process has taken two years to complete and has involved a lot of time and effort from our officers and residents. Medway Council Head of HRA Property and Development, Adam Spokes, has been integral to the tender process and his innovative approach to the service delivery of the new contracts has paved the way for the transformation of the services that Medway Council Housing Team provide to our residents.

From the resident engagement meetings that were held, it was clear to us that your repairs and maintenance contractors should be specialists in their fields with qualifications, accreditations, competency and experience to support their tender bids being critical.

Resident engagement has taken place over the last 18 months, with residents asked what they wanted to see in the new contracts. Residents were given the opportunity to select questions that the contractors would need to answer and were involved in the scoring of the tenders for questions relating to resident engagement and social value aspects of the contract bids. Medway Council Property Services Team look forward to the new contracts beginning and will be closely monitoring progress.

I hope you find this special edition of Housing Matters useful and interesting. Take a look at the new One Medway Social Value initiative on pages 14 and 15. My team are look forward to hearing your ideas.



Key milestones throughout the retender process

- **Appoint delivery consultant** — August 2022
- **Engagement and agree scope of contract** — October 2022
- **Obtain the relevant approvals to appoint** — January 2023
- **Tender** — July 2023
- **Review tenders and draft recommendations** — Oct 2023
- **Obtain the relevant approvals to award** — March 2024
- **Appoint and mobilise** — May 2024
- **Contract start** — September 2024



MEARS

Medway Council are pleased to announce that we will be renewing our contract with Mears Group Plc for the management of responsive repairs, planned works upgrades (such as new kitchens and bathrooms, roof, window and external door renewals) and voids refurbishment works (getting vacant properties ready to let again) across our residential properties.

We will also be partnering with Mears to deliver our energy efficiency works as part of this new contract.

The new contract with Mears Group Plc will begin 1 September 2024.



Medway Council will be embarking on an exciting new contract with Swale Heating for Gas Servicing and Breakdowns across our residential properties as well as our commercial boilers.

The new contract with Swale Heating will begin 1 September 2024.



Communal areas and fire doors in residential buildings are critical components of fire safety considerations. STG have been appointed on a four-year Service Level Agreement to undertake fire risk assessments and reviews that look at key considerations and preventive measures within Medway Council's housing blocks such as:

- Identifying fire hazards
- Evaluating escape routes and accessibility
- Verifying the functionality of emergency lighting systems
- Signage and evacuation procedures
- Record management etc

Conducting these fire risk assessments to communal areas is a crucial aspect of overall fire safety in shared spaces and makes sure that Medway Council Housing is creating a safer environment for all our tenants.



Medway Council Housing Team are excited to announce that we will be embarking on a new contract with RGE Services for electrical services throughout our residential properties and communal areas including smoke detection, electrical testing and electrical rewires.

The new contract with RGE Services will begin 1 September 2024.



How to make contact

For all Repairs and Maintenance, just call Housing Repairs on **01634 333601**, freephone **0800 073 0073**

and choose one of the following:

Option 1 for gas servicing and breakdowns

Option 2 for repairs

Option 3 for planned works upgrades

or email housingrepairs@medway.gov.uk

MEARS



Mears: Customers at the heart of everything

We are pleased to announce that we will be renewing our contract with Mears Group Plc for the management of responsive repairs, planned works upgrades and voids refurbishment works across our residential properties. The new contract with Mears Group Plc will begin 1 September 2024.

Works done by Mears Group Plc will include:

- Responsive repairs
- Planned works such as bathroom and kitchen upgrades, and roof, window and external door renewals
- VOID refurbishments works
- Out of Hours emergencies
- Energy Efficiency works

Mears was established in 1988 as a small maintenance contractor in Gloucestershire under the name 'Mears Limited'. Within seven years Mears expanded across the UK, opening eight operational branches and achieving an impressive turnover of £10.7 million. In 1996, Mears Group Plc was born and known on the London Stock Exchange.

Over the years the company acquired new services including, care, housing management for local and government contracts, along with innovative technology solutions such as thermal imaging.

Mears Group now has over 40 branches, employs over 5,500 people and undertakes more than 6,000 repairs a day. The market-leading specialists also look after a portfolio of more than one million homes across the UK

and work with 70 local authorities, and housing associations.

Mears is one of the UK's leading housing solutions providers to both the public and private sector. They work with clients to help develop, fund and implement innovative housing solutions.

Mears Group's commitment to engaging with and supporting its workforce has been recognised as it has been named one of the top ten big companies to work for in the UK. Mears Group was ranked as the eighth overall best big company to work for in the prestigious best companies' league table for 2023.

As part of its focus on social value, Mears encourages its employees to engage with the communities they work in with employees being given volunteering leave and encouraged to support different projects throughout the year.



Mears Group customer promise.

Mears Group is a highly responsible partner, who is committed to; delivering the highest levels of customer service, keeping promises, creating a great place to work and tackling issues that matter to people and communities.



RGE Services: Fire and electrical compliance services

Medway Council Housing Team are excited to announce that we will be embarking on a new contract with RGE Services for Electrical Compliance throughout our residential properties and communal areas including smoke detection, electrical testing and electrical rewires.

The new contract with RGE Services will begin 1 September 2024.

Works done by RGE Services will include:

- Electrical testing and inspections
- Electrical remedial works
- Smoke & Heat Detector Upgrades
- Lighting testing
- PAT testing
- Rewires

Local authorities, housing associations and blue light services depend on RGE Services to maintain their fire and electrical compliance across thousands of homes and public buildings. Through planned maintenance works, reactive repairs and new installation services, keeping people safe.

RGE Services has been providing fire and electrical compliance services for over 40 years, supporting clients across London and the Southeast with their locally based engineers.

In fire and electrical compliance, RGE Services only deliver two types of contract, which has focused their approach as experts in these fields.

They currently employ over 200 PAYE directly employed, qualified and competent engineers. In addition, they employ over 50 office-based staff at their Essex HQ.



With direct responsibilities as a landlord, including public buildings and spaces, local authorities need a trusted partner for installation, inspection, improvement works and certification programmes.

RGE Service's highly trained and experienced engineers, in combination with robust systems and processes, gives customers confidence in their fire and electrical compliance. Certification programmes are delivered on time for great value, with respect and care for local citizens and residents.

RGE's local by design and energy reduction and recycling programmes support our customers' own ESG (environment, social, governance) objectives.



Swale Heating: Rely on us to keep you warm

We will be embarking on an exciting new contract with Swale Heating for Gas Servicing and Breakdowns across our residential properties. The new contract with Swale Heating will begin 1 September 2024.

Works done by Swale Heating will include:

- Annual gas servicing (domestic and communal)
- Boiler and central heating repairs
- Boiler upgrades in homes and schemes

Swale Heating currently work for 25 social housing providers including councils and housing associations and are responsible for keeping around 140,000 customers safe and warm from across the South East, London and East Anglia.

They provide expert, independent guidance in choosing the best heating systems and products available for your needs.

Swale Heating was started by Ian Pierson in 1972 with one core purpose, 'to be trusted by our customers to keep them safe and warm, every day of every year', which is still at the heart of everything.

Being part of the local community is important to Swale Heating. They support local communities and have a long-standing relationship with Demelza Hospice Care for Children. It is Demelza's mission of 'we believe every child and young person who has a serious or terminal condition should receive the care and attention they need to live the most fulfilling life they

can, and that they and their families have the opportunity to build memories, for however long they have together' that makes Swale want to support them.

Throughout many years of trading, Swale Heating have built partnerships with many of the stand-out names of the heating industry to guarantee residents the products and services which are ideally suited to their individual requirements.

Swale Heating understand that the failure of your heating system can be a worrying time for home or business owners. That's why they are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The contact centre is always operated by real people who are able to deploy a trusted engineer at any time of the day or night.

As one of the UK's leading heating installation and maintenance companies, it is no wonder Swale's customers turn to them for expert advice to keep them warm.



Handyman services

What is the Handyman Service?

The Handyman can help customers by carrying out small jobs around the home free of charge.

The service will focus on any small jobs that do not require immediate attention and fall outside of contracted repair works.

Customers will need to provide materials for any job undertaken.

How to qualify

To qualify for the Handyman Service you must fall into the following criteria:

- Must have a clear rent account or be keeping to a repayment plan
- No records of ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)
- Have allowed us to carry out Gas Servicing and Planned Maintenance to your home without obstruction
- Compliancy with your tenancy agreement

What does the Handyman Service provide?

The Handyman is a skilled person who has the tools and equipment needed to carry out works. Generally the Handyman will be able to carry out small jobs up to a maximum of two hours. Customers will be limited to two hours service per year (April 1 to March 31).

How to book

You can make appointments for the service by phoning the Housing Repairs Team on: **01634 333601** or Freephone **0800 073 0073**.



Types of work

The Handyman will be able to:

- Put up shelves
- Adjust, fit or fix internal doors or gates
- Ease and adjust cupboard doors
- Hang pictures, curtain rails, blinds and mirrors (please note that any of these items must already be cut to size)
- Assemble flat pack furniture
- Fit or renew door bells (non electric)
- Fit a toilet seat
- Put up a rotary washing line to existing posts or hooks
- Bleed radiators
- Fit wall brackets or hanging baskets
- Trim internal doors to fit new carpets or floor coverings
- Fit a plug or chain to bath, basin or sink
- Change light bulbs or remove or replace lampshades, curtains and pelmets

The handyman will not be able to complete any gas or electrical works.

Property services team

The Property Services Team manage the homes that you live in. They manage all the repairs and maintenance contracts to ensure that tenants have access to responsive repairs when needed. They ensure that homes are in a good and safe condition by completing routine inspections and carrying out regular servicing and testing programmes. They also arrange all our planned programmes of work in homes and across estates.



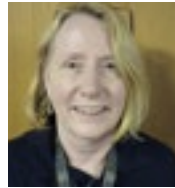
Adam Spokes
Head of HRA Property and
Development



Deb Brainwood
Building Surveyor



Lee Deacon
Property Services
Operations Manager



Serena Gale
Building Surveyor



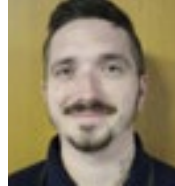
Manjit Kaur
Property Services
Coordinator



Nicola Martin
Stock Condition Surveyor



**Hayden
Schuitemaker**
Interim Asset
and Energy Manager



Kyle Wilkinson
Clerk of Works



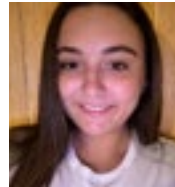
Anthony O'Donoghue
HRA Asset and Energy
Manager



Joshua Arthur
Capital Works Project
Manager



Adrian Armour
Compliance Project
Manager



Tilly Carter
HRA Repairs Apprentice



Natalie Day
Senior Asset Officer



Jo Pickering
Resident Liaison Officer

HOW TO CONTACT US

To contact the Property Services Team for general enquiries:

Phone: **01634 333601**

or freephone: **0800 073 0073**

Email: **housingrepairs@medway.gov.uk**

If you have any specific safety concerns email:

housingsafetyconcern@medway.gov.uk

Fire safety Information

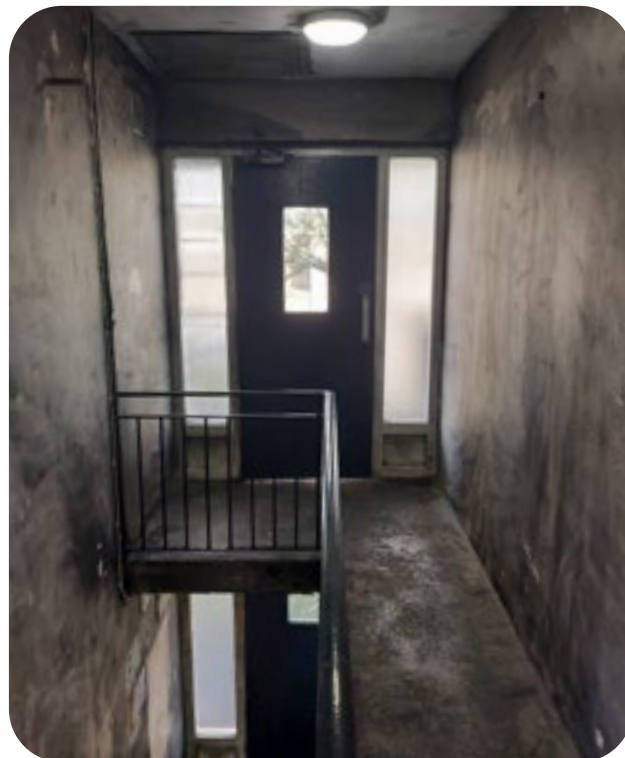
Medway Council has an obligation under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 to provide fire safety information to residents on an annual basis.

It is important that you know how to reduce the chances of a fire starting in your home and how to keep yourself, your family and your property safe from fire.

Most fires in the home are caused by lifestyle factors such as:

Smoking, leaving cooking unattended, using candles, storing large amounts of combustible material or even faulty electrical appliances (such as dishwashers left on overnight) or overloading of electrical sockets.

By taking a few sensible precautions you can significantly reduce your chances of having a fire.



Fire doors play a key role in protecting people and the property in the event of a fire.

It is imperative that

- Fire doors should be shut when not in use.
- Residents or their guests should not tamper with self-closing devices on any fire door.
- Residents should report any fault with, or damage to, fire doors immediately to Housing Repairs telephone **01634 333601** and select option 2 or email **housingrepairs@medway.gov.uk**

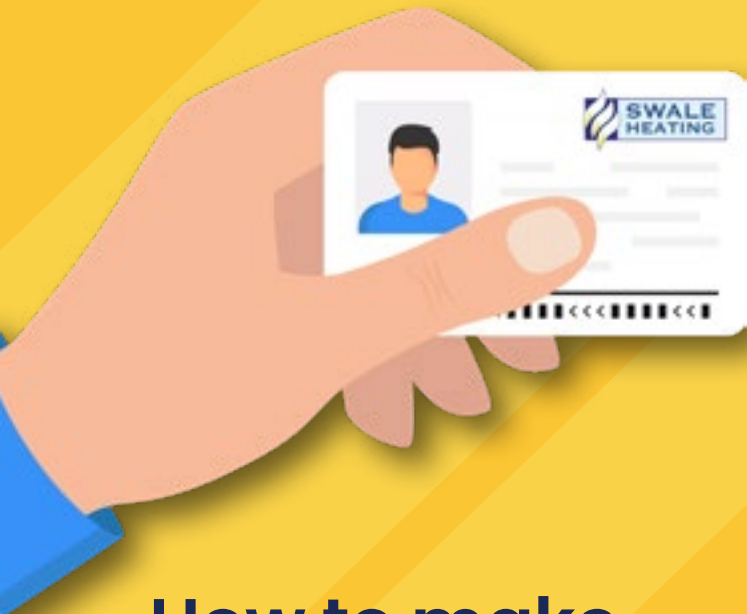
Failing to comply with the above could be deemed as a potential breach of your tenancy agreement.

Medway Councils Landlord Services fire safety policy is available by scanning the QR code.



Remember to always ask for identification

Tenants and Leaseholders are advised to check the identity of all officials who call at their home, to make sure they are genuine.



Anyone from Medway Council who calls at a home address will always have an ID badge with them and this will be the same for our repairs and maintenance contractors. No one should request to enter your home without a prior appointment.

They will have no objection to you checking their ID. This includes contractors who work for the council, such as Mears, RGE Services, Swale Heating and STG Building Consultancy.

If you are not satisfied, do not let them into your property and phone us on: **01634 333344**, or **01634 333601**.

How to make a complaint



We're committed to providing excellent customer service to all our residents and visitors.

However, there may be times when you feel unhappy with the service we've provided.

Your feedback is very important to us. Knowing what you think or want helps us improve our services.

If you make a complaint, we'll investigate it thoroughly and let you know the outcome. We'll be fair and we'll try to put things right if we've made a mistake.

You can make a complaint in the following ways

Online — [medway.gov.uk](https://www.medway.gov.uk)



or
scan the
QR code

Write — **Customer Relations Team, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR**

In person — **at a local Community hub**

Phone — **01634 333 333**

Text relay — **18001 01634 333 333**

Stock condition surveys

Keeping you and your home safe.



Why we do a survey

It's important for us to inspect your home so we can help keep you safe.

Our Stock Condition Survey looks at the age and condition of your home to help us work out when certain parts may need to be replaced such as windows, roofs, bathrooms and kitchens.

About the survey

Our surveyors will inspect your property to make sure it's in good condition.

They will look at the condition of fixtures and fittings and make note of where work may be required to improve them. We will complete surveys approximately every five years.

The appointment is to review the condition of your home, it is not about checking up on you and your family.

Your appointment

The survey will take approximately 90 minutes to complete.

It will be carried out by a Property Services Technical Officer or an external consultant who will carry ID.



Booking a survey

We will make an appointment with you.

Where this may not have been possible a surveyor may cold call, if it is not a suitable time they will book a convenient appointment with you.

To find out more about our Stock Condition Survey programme scan the QR code:



Or visit:

medway.gov.uk/CouncilTenants

Accessing your home

The surveyor will need to view all internal and external areas including any loft space.

Please make sure these are accessible before the surveyor arrives so that the appointment can be completed without any disruption.



The Big Door Knock



The Housing Services Team will be holding Big Door Knock events to introduce ourselves to you, let you know what support we can offer, how you can keep in touch with us and find out what's important to you. We will be holding events in the following locations:

20 September – Gillingham including James Street, Saunders Street, Cornish Manors and Mountevans House.

18 October – Rainham including Suffolk Court, Brown Street, Scott Avenue, Taswell Road, and The Mailyns.

15 November – Rainham including Longford Court/Close, Regency Close, Walsingham close, Derwent Way and surrounding areas.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

We will soon be launching our annual tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) survey.

Once again we will be working in partnership with In-House Research to carry out the survey.

All of our tenants will be contacted either by phone, email or SMS during September and October 2024 and all tenants will have an opportunity to respond. The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

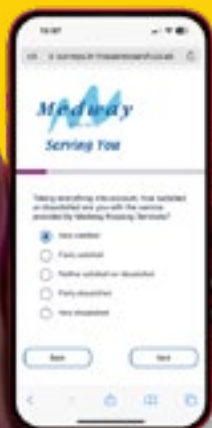
If you receive a call from In-House Research, the number displayed will be **020 4585 0669**.

Invitations to complete the survey online will be sent from:

MedwayTSM@feedback.inhousersearch.uk

We will publish the results in future editions of Housing Matters and details on how we will be using the feedback to improve our services.

For more information on the survey or how to get involved in the services we deliver, please email: **tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk**



One Medway Social Value



What is Social Value?

It is an Act of Parliament – Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. An Act to require public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts; and for connected purposes.

Source: legislation.gov.uk

How might Social Value Projects affect me?

Social Value projects can build communities and neighbourhoods, and benefit Medway Council tenants and their families.

Examples of previous social value projects have been the refurbishment of the Rainbow Room at Hazlemere Drive, installation of benches at Centenary Gardens and gifting of water butts to Homes for Independent Living.

How have Social Value Projects been done before?

Historically social value, during a tender process, has been seen as a bit of a tick box exercise. Contractors have submitted tender returns with a social value promise which mainly focusses on apprenticeships and using local labour and suppliers. Whilst the Medway Council Housing Team (Housing Revenue Account – HRA) recognises the importance of these initiatives, the service and those that it engaged with feel that social value is much more than that.



Why change the way Social Value Projects have been delivered before?

As the world that we live in changes, and events like covid and the war in Ukraine happen, the service and contracts need to have flexibility to adapt to meet Medway Council residents ever changing needs. Inflation and a cost-of-living crisis has hit Medway Council residents hard, and by adopting a different approach to how social value is delivered it will enable the service to make significant interventions that could and should positively impact on our residents lives. This 'One Medway' approach should assist in making that happen.

It has been difficult for the service to hold contractors to account when it comes to delivering their social value promises, with no real importance being placed on social value from either a contractual or operational standpoint. This is something the service intended on addressing as part of this procurement activity.

What's different about the One Medway Social Value Commitment?

The service asked all nine contracts/contractors to commit a monetary figure for each year of the contract term that will be used for social value projects across Medway. The money that each of the nine contracts pledged, alongside the HRA, will create an overall budget that will be used for social value initiatives across the HRA's housing stock. Expenditure from the budget will be open, auditable, and transparent.

The concept is that rather than contractors individually delivering low level, sporadic social value projects, all key stakeholders will come together as one and create a more significant overall budget. This will allow for some larger scale social projects and initiatives to be delivered in consultation with residents.



How will Social Value projects be chosen after 1 September 2024?

A 'One Medway' working group consisting of key stakeholders will be formed once all contracts



have been procured. The working group will consist of residents/tenant representatives, Medway Council Officers (Head of HRA Property & Development, Head of Tenant Services, Resident Liaison Officer, Property Services Coordinator and Property Services Operations Manager) and at least one representative from each of the nine contracts.

Residents will lead and have the final say on how the social value budget is spent. Officers will look to engage and advise with a mix of residents across the stock to ensure all residents are represented and the budget spent fairly.

There will be three working group meetings each year to agree, assign, monitor and present results which will then be reviewed.

What will happen to any money left over?

Any money underspent will be carried forward to the following year. The group will endeavour to spend the budget each year but if there is any budget left at the end of the term then this will be utilised for future social value initiatives.

How can I get involved?

You can apply to join the One Medway Social Value working group or make a suggestion for a Social Value Project by emailing: SocialValueProjects@Medway.gov.uk



WANT TO SEE HOW WE ARE PERFORMING?

Look at our performance
monitoring figures
on the website:

medway.gov.uk/HousingPerformance

Useful contacts



Repairs

You can request a repair from us at any time of day, seven days a week. Repairs are attended by our contractors Mears and are prioritised into emergency, urgent and non-urgent repairs.

Phone: **01634 333601**
Freephone: **0800 073 0073**
email: housingrepairs@medway.gov.uk

Housing Tenancy Team

For anything related to your tenancy, or to report anti-social behaviour.

Phone: **01634 333344**
email: housingtenancyteam@medway.gov.uk

Housing Income and Leasehold Team

For anything related to your rent, service charges or financial support.

phone: **01634 333344**
email: housingincometeam@medway.gov.uk

You can contact a housing officer Monday to Thursday from 9.30am to 5pm, and Fridays from 9.30am to 4.45pm, excluding bank holidays.

Cost of living: help for households

For help and advice, please visit:
medway.gov.uk/HouseholdHelp

Register for a housing services online account

A Housing Services Online account is a simple way to manage your housing tenancies in one place.

With an account, you can:

- pay housing rent
- keep track of balances
- view statements
- see recent payments.

Registering for an account online takes about five minutes. Sign up or login at medway.gov.uk/HousingAccount

We would like to remind our customers to be aware of suspicious phone calls, messages or callers to their property.

All our housing staff and contractors will wear an ID badge.

We will always publicise if we or contractors working on our behalf are conducting a survey in your area, or make an appointment with you to visit your property.

If you have any doubts do not engage with such callers. Please phone the main office on **01634 333344** to check details or report any suspicious activity.

To request a stop cold callers pack phone **01634 333333** or email consumer.protection@medway.gov.uk



Follow us on Facebook – search for Medway Council – Housing Services for all the latest news, events and things that matter to you.

medway.gov.uk/Housing

Medway
COUNCIL

Serving You