

Tendring Reports

Latest news for council tenants in Tendring

Issue 2 2016



New gas contracts awarded

From 31 October, two new contractors have taken over our contracts for the servicing and repair of the gas heating appliances in our properties. For the first time, we have merged our contracts for the servicing and repair of our domestic gas heating appliances with those for the servicing and repair of the large scale boilers in our sheltered housing schemes meaning that one contractor will carry out all of the works in their area.

Our new contractors are:

Gasway who will be working in the North of the district (Alresford, Ardleigh, Bradfield, Dovercourt, Elmstead Market, Great Oakley, Harwich, Lawford, Little Oakley, Manningtree, Mistley, Ramsey, Tendring, Weeley, Wix and Wrabness).

Blue Flame who will be working in the south of the district (Brightlingsea, Clacton, Frinton, Great Bentley, Great Holland, Holland on Sea, Kirby Cross, Kirby le Soken, Thorrington, Walton).

As a landlord, we have a legal duty to carry out an annual safety check and service of any of our gas appliances in your home. It is very important that you allow our contractors access to carry out this work as it will make sure that these appliances are working safely and efficiently, are economical to run and are not a cause of danger to you, your family or your neighbour through carbon monoxide poisoning or gas explosions.



You can find out more about what to expect from our gas contractors when they service your domestic gas boiler on the back page of this newsletter.

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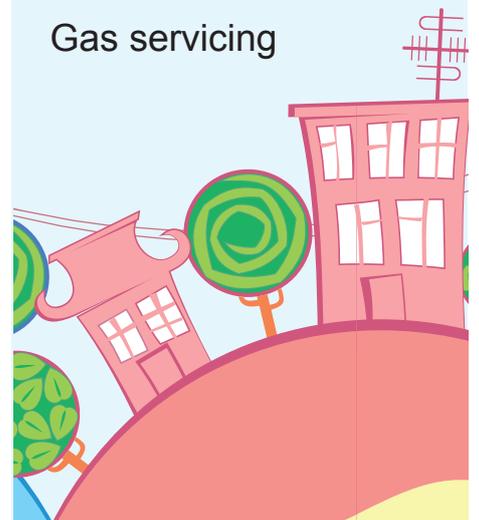
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TENANT APPROVED DOCUMENT

Your housing team

There has been a change in the senior management structure at the Council recently. Some of you may have noticed that the letters we send out are now stamped **Operational Services** instead of **Life Opportunities**.

The new Operational Services department is made up of the following sections and where a section is responsible for any landlord functions this has been listed under the team's name.

Building and Engineering

Manage the responsive repairs contract, survey void properties and get them ready for reletting, manage the cyclical and planned maintenance and improvement programme, including installations of adaptations

Coastal Protection

Customer and Commercial

Tenant involvement and consultation, Careline, receiving repair requests, Housing Reception at the Town Hall and the Right to Buy

Environmental Services

Joint investigation of noise and other nuisance complaints with our Tenancy Management team

Housing

Tenancy management, lettings, mutual exchanges and the Older Persons team

Public Realm

Sports and Leisure

Rent payment and recovery comes under the Corporate Services department and is based in our offices in Pier Avenue.

All of our contact details remain the same.



Celebrating the Queen's birthday

During the summer, 50 residents from our sheltered housing schemes joined the regular tea dance members at Clacton Leisure Centre to celebrate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 90th Birthday. The event, a joint effort by our Older Persons team and Clacton Leisure Centre teams, began with music and dancing before afternoon tea was served accompanied by guest vocalist Jude McIntyre.

The Chairman of TDC, Cllr Jayne Chapman announced a toast to the Queen and led in the singing of Happy Birthday.

Cllr Chapman said "I was so pleased to be invited to the event and it was a wonderful way to celebrate the Queen's birthday and see so many people enjoying themselves. A good time was had by all!"

Everyone who attended the event also received a commemorative mug.





Tenancy Fraud Update

Earlier this year, we held our first Key Amnesty – giving any people occupying our properties who were not entitled to a period of 30 days to hand in the keys with no questions being asked. We also publicised our contact details for any individuals wishing to report suspected tenancy fraud.

The term tenancy fraud can refer to any of the following:

- Subletting or giving your property to someone else without our permission;
- Passing on the keys to someone else for a one-off payment;
- Moving out and leaving grown up children in the property;
- Leaving the property empty or not using it as your main or principal home;
- Failing to tell us that the tenant of the property has died and continuing to live in the property;
- Obtaining a council property by giving false information; and
- Swapping your home with another tenant without our permission.

Although no keys were handed in during our amnesty period, we had 17 cases of suspected tenancy fraud reported to us and we carried out a further 16 investigations into other addresses.

These investigations resulted in 5 properties being returned to us for reallocation to those in housing need as well as reductions in Housing Benefit payments totalling more than £544 per week – a saving of £28,000 a year. Reductions in Council Tax relief and the removal of single person discounts also resulted in projected annual savings of a further £4,000.

Based on these results, we intend to continue our focus on tenancy fraud.

Sheltered Housing Review

A full review is currently being carried out regarding the future of two of our sheltered housing schemes – Honeycroft in Lawford and Spendells House in Walton.

We currently have 325 sheltered housing properties and, although they have been maintained and managed to a high standard, they do not all meet modern needs and requirements.

Both Honeycroft and Spendells House have low occupancy levels compared with our other schemes – of the 41 properties at Honeycroft only 17 are occupied and at Spendells House 15 of the 31 properties are occupied. The accommodation at both of these schemes mainly consists of bedsits with residents sharing the use of bath and shower rooms.

As part of our review, residents and their families have been consulted and they were talked through a number of potential options for the schemes in order to make them more financially viable. The feedback from residents showed that they were in favour of changes being made but they do not want to see the schemes closed.

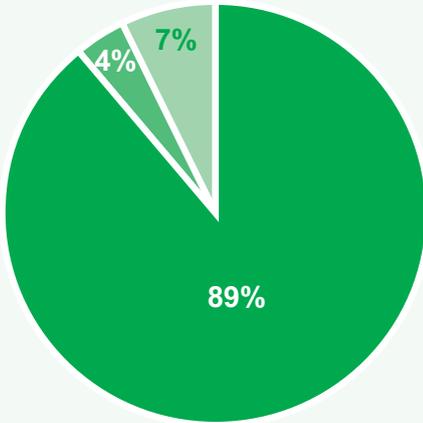
The feedback will now be used to help shape a way forward before any final decisions are made.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2016

Earlier this year, we carried out the seventh survey to find out how satisfied you are with the services we provide and, set out below is a summary of some of the responses that we got:

* The figures below have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number

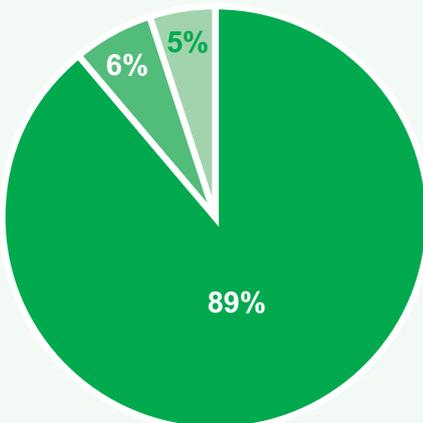
Overall satisfaction with us as a landlord



Over 89% of you said that you were very or fairly satisfied with the service we provide as a landlord, compared with 7% who were dissatisfied.

Very or fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Very or fairly dissatisfied	

Value for money

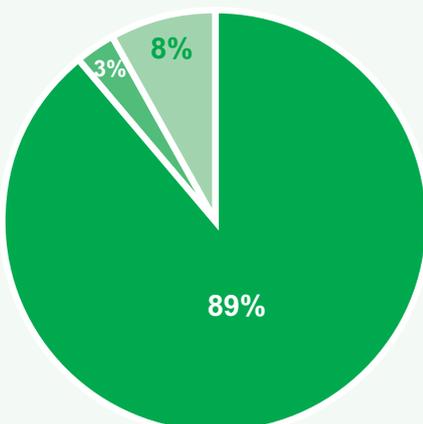


Similarly, 89% of you said that you were very or fairly satisfied with the value for money of your rent, compared with 5% who were dissatisfied.

Very or fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Very or fairly dissatisfied	

80% also said that they were very or fairly satisfied with the value for money of their service charges. 8% were dissatisfied with this.

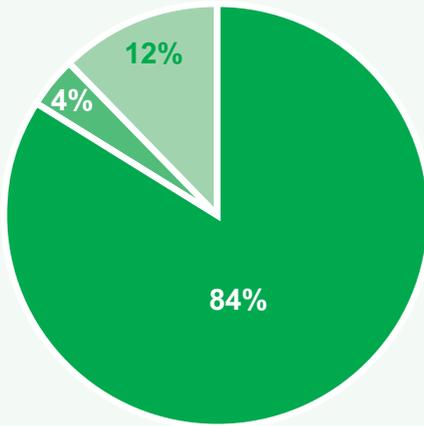
Quality of your home



Again, 89% of you said that you were very or fairly satisfied with the quality of your home, with only 8% saying that they were dissatisfied.

Very or fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Very or fairly dissatisfied	

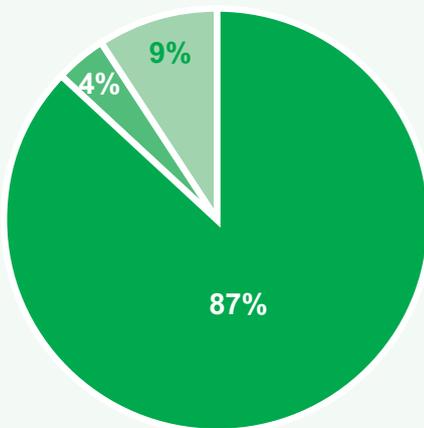
Repairs and maintenance



84% of you were very or fairly satisfied with our repairs and maintenance service with 12% expressing some degree of dissatisfaction.

Very or fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Very or fairly dissatisfied	

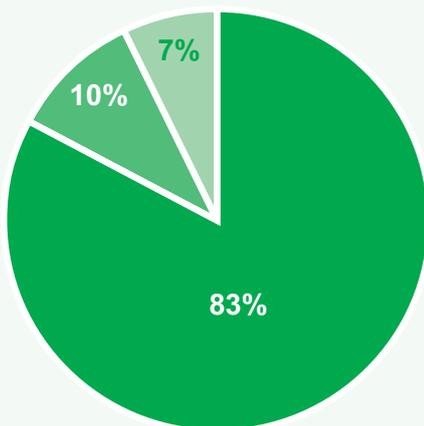
Neighbourhood and anti social behaviour



Satisfaction with neighbourhoods remains high, with 87% again saying that they are very or fairly satisfied with the area they live in.

Very or fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Very or fairly dissatisfied	

Contact and communication



Of those of you who had contacted in the last 12 months for reasons other than paying your rent, 81% found our staff to be helpful and 72% were satisfied with the outcome of their contact with us.

A further 83% of you said that you were very or fairly satisfied with how well we kept you informed as a tenant.

Very or fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Very or fairly dissatisfied	

Satisfaction survey continued



The survey asked ‘ Which methods to you prefer us to use to inform or consult you about issues that might affect you?’ and more than one response was allowed. The top three preferred methods of contact were:

- In writing
- By phone
- Via our newsletter

Service priorities

Respondents were also asked, ‘*Of the following services, which three do you consider to be the most important?*’ and the top three were:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Overall quality of their home
- Rent as value for money

We will be reviewing the responses obtained to this survey together with members of our Tenants Panel to identify any areas of improvement.

Helping To Prevent Condensation

It is now that time of year when condensation can become a big problem. This is often reported to us as damp but the problem can often be avoided by following some simple steps.

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface, such as a window or a wall. As the air cools, water is deposited.

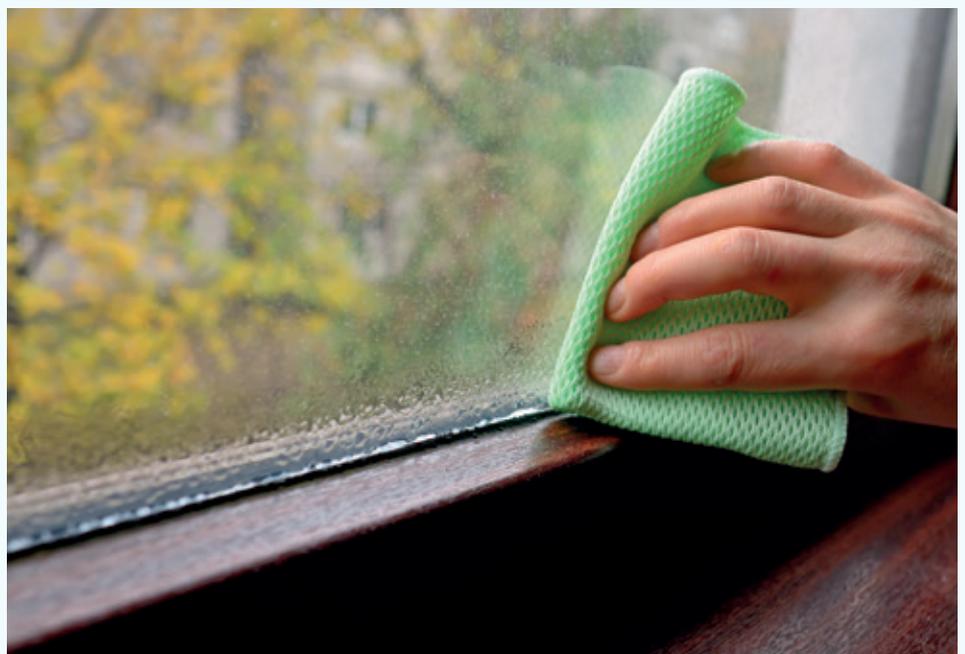
The key causes of condensation are:

- Drying washing indoors;
- Not opening windows to let moisture out after cooking or bathing;
- Using a tumble dryer that is not vented to the outside;
- Lack of ventilation during the winter months;
- Not using heating effectively; and
- Using calor gas heaters.

Steps to tackle condensation

If condensation occurs in your home, you should take the steps listed below to deal with this, but there are also some simple measures you can take right away.

Wipe down your windows and sills every morning and then wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator. You should wash away any mould that occurs with a mould cleaner or a bleach and water solution (but make sure that you wear rubber gloves when applying this). If you use a mould cleaner, always follow the manufacturer's instructions. If mildew has affected your clothes these should be dry cleaned and any carpets shampooed. If you disturb mould by brushing or vacuuming this could increase the risk of breathing difficulties.



How to avoid condensation:

You can help to reduce the risk of condensation in your home by:

1) Producing less moisture

- Cover pans when cooking and don't leave kettles boiling



- Always dry your clothes outside. If it has to be done indoors, put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or extractor fan on.
- If you have a tumble dryer make sure that this is properly vented to the outside. In most cases, we can arrange to do this if you ask us to.
- Avoid using calor gas heaters as they produce a lot of moisture (an amount equal to the size of the bottle)

2) Ventilating your home to remove any excess moisture

- When you are in, ventilate your home by opening some windows or some window vents.
- Make sure that your kitchen and bathroom windows are opened enough to let steam escape and close the doors to these rooms when they are in use
- Ventilate your cupboards and wardrobes and avoid putting too many things in them, as that stops the air circulating.
- Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls (walls which have a room on both sides) rather than against outside walls.

- If you have to position your wardrobe against an outside wall, regularly check in and behind it as mould can form behind anything that is against an outside wall

3) Heat your home a little more

- Try to make sure that your home is at a constant low heat throughout the day so there are no cold surfaces for the water droplets to settle on. This is more beneficial than having your heating on full for only a few hours.



We can install equipment, such as extractor fans to help remove moisture and our properties are insulated to reduce heat loss but, unless you help us by following these guidelines it is likely that condensation and mould growth will re occur.

Is it condensation?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows;
- rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, or leaking through a cracked pipe;
- rising damp due to a defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course

These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark'. If the damp does not come from any of these sources, then it is probably condensation.

If you need any further advice, please contact us on 01255 686477 or by email HousingRepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk

Gas servicing

Need to contact us?

You can do this by:

Telephoning:

01255 686464

for rent account enquiries

01255 686468

for rent arrears enquiries

01255 686455

for right to buy enquiries

01255 686488

to report anti social behaviour or other nuisance complaints

01255 686477 to report a repair during working hours

01255 222022

to report emergency repairs only outside of normal working hours

01255 686466 for Housing Register or allocation enquiries

01255 686436 for enquiries about special needs housing or adaptations

Emailing:

housing.services@tendringdc.gov.uk for general enquiries

HousingRepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk to report any non urgent repairs that are needed to your home

HousingASB@tendringdc.gov.uk to report any incidents of anti social behaviour or nuisance

tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk to find out more about getting involved in our services

Writing to:

Operational Services (Housing)
Tendring District Council
Town Hall, Station Road
Clacton on Sea, Essex CO15 1SE

Visiting:

Housing Reception at the Town Hall in Clacton between 9am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4.45pm on Fridays

OR

For rent account or arrears enquiries ONLY

88-90 Pier Avenue, Clacton

What you should expect from our contractor

- Carry out a visual inspection of any/all gas appliances fitted
- Check and record the gas rate / burner pressure to ensure economical running.
- Carry out a tightness test at the gas meter to ensure there are no leaks on pipe work or appliances.
- Test the appliance flue gases with an electronic meter, ensuring complete combustion and safe operation.
- Check and clean the condense trap as required.
- Check the ventilation requirements as required.
- Check the correct operation of all safety devices.
- Ask you general questions about the heating system, such as are there any leaks or have you experienced any problems?
- Carry out a visual check of your heating system to look for defects, including radiators, hot water cylinders and associated controls.
- Reset your time clock, if required.
- Visually inspect the entire length of the boiler flue system including a head and shoulders inspection through the loft space if relevant.
- Check the pressure vessel inside the boiler to make sure it is working properly.
- Complete an Electronic Landlords Gas Safety Certificate on their handheld devices. You will then be sent a paper copy of this in the post. If any faults are identified during the service, the engineer may also leave any supporting paperwork with you.
- For older appliances or where the manufacturer's instructions require it, your appliance will be stripped down, cleaned and reassembled and this will be carried out before the above tests are carried out.

In addition to the above they will:

- Complete a visual safety check on the gas cooker if present.
- Test the smoke alarm
- Test the carbon monoxide