

October 2022

Tenant & Leaseholder

News

thanet.gov.uk/myhome

Help with energy bills

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leaseholder focus

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and recharges

Update your information
- with a chance to WIN
£100!



Meet our
Customer
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Support to help with your energy bills

£400 energy grant

All homes with an electricity meter will get £400. If you pay by direct debit or when you receive a bill, £400 will be credited to your utility account.

£650 Low Income Energy Bill Support

If you are on certain means-tested benefits you will get two lump sums paid directly into the account where you receive your benefits. You should have received one payment of £326 in July with the second payment of £326 due in October.

To qualify, you need to have received a payment on any date between 26 April and 25 May 2022 for one of the following benefits:

- Child Tax Credit.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Income Support.
- Universal Credit.
- Working Tax Credit.
- Pension Credit.

Disability cost of living payment

A sum of £150 will be paid automatically into the account of people who receive disability benefits, in October.



Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 5 October 1954, you could be entitled to £100–£300 to help you pay your heating bills. Winter Fuel payments are usually paid automatically if you are eligible and you receive a State Pension or another social security benefit (excluding Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Child Benefit and Universal Credit). Find how much you could get and how to claim on [gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)

Winter Fuel Payment extra

If you get a winter fuel payment, an extra £300 will be added to it.

Cold Weather Payments

Cold Weather Payments are one-off payments to help you pay for extra heating costs when it's very cold. If you are eligible, you will get a payment each time the temperature drops below a specific temperature for a set period of time. You may be eligible if you already get:

- Pension Credit.
- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Universal Credit.

Find out more on the government's Cold Weather Payments website: [gov.uk/cold-weather-payment](https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment)

Warm Home Discount Scheme

If you're eligible for a £150 discount, you'll receive a letter in October from your energy supplier with information on how you will receive the payment.

Grants to help you pay off energy debts

All of the big energy firms have charitable trusts and funds that can help if you're in debt and struggling to repay.

If you would like more advice on reducing your bills or reducing energy use please contact the energy advice team on our website [thanet.gov.uk/energyinthehome/](https://www.thanet.gov.uk/energyinthehome/)

Meet Our Customer Transaction Team

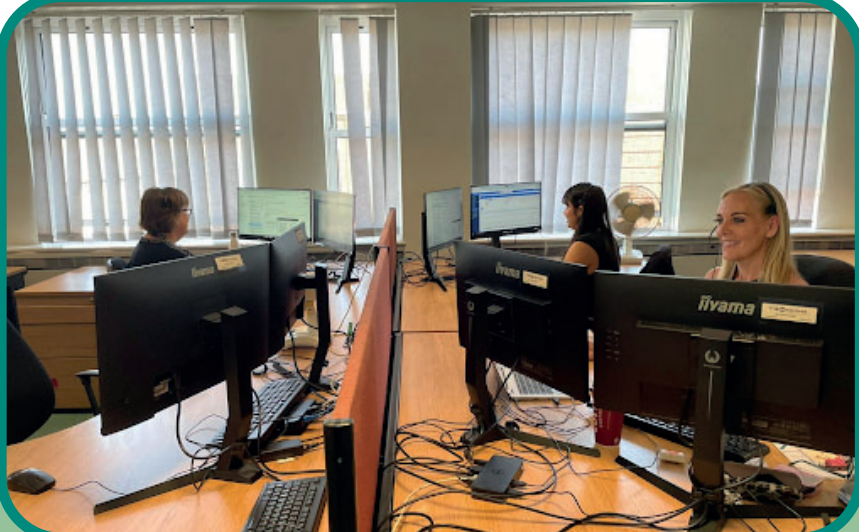
What we do

We are a team of four, and we answer all the calls that you make to the Tenant and Leaseholder Services Team. We also manage the emails that you send to the myhome@thanet.gov.uk mailbox.

We always try to answer your questions during your telephone call, but sometimes we will need to get advice from the team or ask someone to call you back.

We are responsible for a number of other tasks that help to keep the service running smoothly, by:

- Maintaining the housing management system.
- Ensuring tenancy information is up to date.
- Managing complaint responses.
- Letting garages.
- Hiring of council-owned community halls.
- Ordering replacement door fobs for tenants or leaseholders that request them.



Our biggest challenge

Monday mornings are our busiest time for calls. It's hard to answer all the waiting calls quickly. If you find yourself in the Monday morning queue and your call is not urgent, please call back later in the day, when we hope that the queue will be shorter.

We know that it can be frustrating when we can't put you through to the person you want to speak to straight away. Many of our colleagues are out and about, visiting tenants, so we ask you to give us as much information as you can, and we will ask them to call you back.

We understand that sometimes situations can be overwhelming and we do our best to help you. We find it very difficult when frustrated residents shout or swear at us. If a resident is verbally abusive to us on the phone, we have to end the call and can't give the caller any further help.

How can you help us?

If you change your email address or mobile telephone number please give us your up to date details so we can contact you when we need to.



Tenant responsibilities



When you became a tenant you signed a Tenancy Agreement. The Agreement explains our responsibilities as your landlord and your responsibilities as our tenant.

As a tenant, you are expected to do a number of things such as:

- Pay your rent on time and not owe us any rent.
- Report any repairs that are needed to your home.
- Allow us and our contractors to enter your home to carry out necessary inspections, gas servicing, repairs and maintenance.
- Dispose of your waste in the bins provided.
- Live in your home and ask our permission if you want to run a business from your home.
- Keep your home clean, free from rubbish and in good condition at all times.
- Respect your neighbours and allow them to enjoy their homes in peace and quiet.
- Not take part in any anti-social behaviour such as playing loud music late at night, late night DIY, allowing your home to be used for selling/taking drugs, letting your dogs bark for long periods of time, etc.
- Ensure your own behaviour and that of your children, friends, relatives and visitors while they are at your home does not interfere with your neighbours' enjoyment of their home. This includes how you and they behave in communal areas.
- Let us know if your circumstances change, for example if your partner comes to live with you or your adult child leaves home.



As your landlord we provide a general repair, gas and central heating repair service.

However there are some repairs and maintenance that you are responsible for.

Your responsibilities for general repairs and maintenance include:

- Decorating inside your home. This includes repairing any surface cracks or holes in walls and ceilings.
- Making sure UPVC windows and doors are regularly cleaned and oiled.
- Replacing broken window panes.
- Minor repairs to internal doors and frames.
- Cleaning the frames and glass of your doors and windows.
- Repairing or replacing any door furniture.
- Adjusting or repairing kitchen units, drawers, doors, shelves and worktops.
- Repair and maintenance of meter boxes.
- Pest control to keep your home free of rats, mice, fleas, and bed bugs.

Your responsibilities for plumbing and drainage include:

- Clearing blockages in toilets, sinks, baths and waste pipes within your home.
- Replacing tap washers, sink plugs and chains, baths, basins, and toilet seats.
- Clearing blockages in external gullies, except in shared areas to flats.
- Replacing the grids over drains.

Your responsibilities for electrics:

You must report any electrical repairs that you need to Mears. If you would like to carry out any electrical work in your home this must be done by a qualified electrical contractor, approved by us. To check if your contractor is approved, please email myhome@thanet.gov.uk or call **01843 577262**.

Tenant responsibilities for private gardens include:

- Repairing footpaths, yards and patios, if they are not the main access to your front or back doors.
- Repairing or replacing gates and fencing, but we will repair fences that border a public footpath.
- Replacing clothes posts, pulleys and washing lines, except in shared drying areas.
- Keeping air bricks clear and clean.
- Keeping your garden tidy, by cutting the grass and hedges.

Don't forget:

- You are responsible for repairing or replacing damage you have caused to your home by neglect or misuse, even if the damage was accidental.
- You are responsible for making sure that there isn't too much condensation in your home. This will help to avoid the build up of mould.
- You need our permission if you want to carry out improvements to your home, like laying a patio or installing a new kitchen, for example. You don't need our permission for small DIY jobs like decorating or putting up shelves.



Rechargeable Works

Tenants are paying the price

The majority of our tenants know their responsibilities and look after their homes, but there are a small number who don't. In April 2022, our Rechargeable Works Policy came into effect. It enables us to recharge tenants who do not uphold their responsibilities or cause damage which we must put right.

This includes:

- Where a tenant has caused damage that is beyond normal wear and tear. This includes damage caused by members of the tenant's household, family members, friends or other visitors, including pets.
- Charging for court costs for action needed if tenancy conditions are broken, or if you don't give us access to carry out your annual gas or electrical safety checks.

Since April 2022 we have recharged tenants over £66,000

- £62,561 for damage and rubbish left behind when people move out and which we have to put right before we can re-let the property to a new tenant.
- £3,822 for damage to tenants' homes including glazing, locks, lights and plug sockets.
- We have also recharged tenants for rubbish and garden clearance.

If you have received an invoice for rechargeable works and have not yet spoken to our Income Recovery Team please get in touch. They can talk to you about payment and agree a payment plan with you.

You can find out more about rechargeable works and our policy at thanet.gov.uk/myhome



Leaseholder Focus

Our Home Ownership Officer, Kayleigh Horwood

Kayleigh looks after Right to Buy applications, leasehold enquiries and makes sure that invoices for service charges are sent out to you on time.



What being a Leaseholder means

If you bought your flat or maisonette from the council or on the open market in a council-owned block, you are a leaseholder. Your home is part of a larger building with some communal elements, such as the roof, stairways, halls and landings. The council is responsible for maintaining the exterior and communal parts of the building. As a leaseholder you pay for your portion of the costs through service charges.

Leasehold service charges

The cost of managing and maintaining a building is shared amongst all the flats in the block. This is called a service charge, and can include, but is not limited to:

- Ground rent.
- Buildings insurance.
- Communal cleaning, lighting and grounds maintenance.
- Communal repairs, maintenance and improvements to the building.
- Our management fee.

All leaseholders receive five invoices in a financial year.		
Month received	Name of invoice	What it covers
April	1st payment in advance	An estimated invoice for the first six months of the current financial year.
April	Contribution to reserve	Money that is collected and saved for future major or planned works.
April	Ground rent	£10 ground rent charge.
September	Actual cost invoice	An invoice for the actual amount to cover the previous financial year. This takes into account the payments in advance made in that year. If the amount collected through payments in advance is not enough, you will receive an invoice for the difference.
October	Month received	An estimated invoice for the remaining six months of the current financial year.

Are you having difficulty paying?

Please get in touch with us if you are having difficulties in paying your service charges, as we can help to arrange a payment plan. Our Financial Wellbeing Team may also be able to help with:

- Guiding you through a change in your finances.
- Benefits and debt advice.
- Giving you advice on making a budget or to refer you to agencies who may be able to support you.

For more information, call **01843 577262**, email **myhome@thanet.gov.uk** or visit **thanet.gov.uk/myhome**

Responsibility for leasehold repairs

The council is responsible for maintaining the building structure, exterior and communal or shared parts of the building. If you see that any repairs are needed to these areas, please report them to Mears by calling **0800 023 4320**.

You are responsible for all items within your home, such as wires, pipes, taps, kitchen cupboards, sanitary ware, space heating, glazing, room decoration and built-in cupboards.

Alterations to your home

You need our permission for any changes to the structure of your home. These include replacing a kitchen or bathroom, adding a satellite dish, removing internal walls or replacing windows or front doors.

Approval is given by Thanet District Council as your landlord, **not** as the planning or building regulation authority. You may also need to apply for planning permission and building control approval for alterations.

Sub-letting your home

As a leaseholder you can sublet your property. If you do sublet, you become a landlord and are subject to the rules and regulations that apply to landlords. You should ask for independent legal advice so that you understand your responsibilities as a landlord and you should think about the following:

- You will be required to pay a subletting fee to the council.
- The payment of service charges and ground rent are still your responsibility.
- You will need to provide us with a copy of the tenancy agreement, electrical safety certificate and gas safety certificate (if the property has a gas supply).
- You are responsible for the behaviour of your tenant and their guests.
- You will need to provide us with up to date contact details for you, your tenant and any Management Company, in case of emergencies.

Right to Buy



Who has the right to buy their council home?

To buy your council home you must be a secure tenant and have been a public sector tenant for at least three years.

You may not be able to buy your home if:

- Your property is specifically suitable for elderly or disabled tenants.
- You are in breach of any part of your tenancy.
- You have outstanding possession orders.
- You have problems with debt.

What happens if I apply to buy my council home?

When we receive your application we will visit your home and make a valuation at the current market rate. We will work out the discount available to you as a tenant to help you buy the property. The discount will depend on the type of property that you live in and how long you have been a tenant.

- If you sell your home within 5 years, you will need to pay back at least some of the discount.
- If you sell your home within 10 years you will need to offer the council the option to buy it back.

If you buy your home and it is a flat or maisonette which is part of a larger building that is divided into individual homes, you will become a leaseholder.

Find out more about what becoming a leaseholder means on pages 10 and 11.



The Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group



The Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group (TTLG) is a group of residents who represent the views and interests of council tenants and leaseholders across the district. We meet with the TTLG every three months to talk about our policies and strategies. They tell us about any local issues and give us updates from their communities.

The TTLG held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in July and talked about how over the past year they:

- Helped us tackle fly tipping.
- Addressed communal cleaning issues and repairs.
- Looked at and made suggestions for improvements on five of our policies.
- Took part in focus groups.
- Helped us put together our estate and resident involvement strategies (amongst others).
- Set up a litter picking group.
- Worked with us to make sure that we all tackle stigma that can be directed towards our residents and our officers.

Claire, Chair of the TTLG said: "This has been a busy year for the TTLG, and it has had its ups and downs. I feel we have a very strong team, we have worked very hard to help support the Tenant and Leaseholder Service to make positive changes for all residents. I am very proud to be part of this team and everything the TTLG has achieved and of everyone's commitment".

Could you be part of the TTLG?

The TTLG has space for up to 12 members and there are currently vacancies. If you are interested in finding out more about the group and how you could become a member, please email residentinvolvement@thanet.gov.uk or call **01843 577090**.

Advice on mould, damp and condensation

There are different reasons why mould and damp can build up in your home. The most common cause is condensation.

What is condensation?

Condensation is the process where water vapour in the air becomes liquid.

What causes condensation?

Condensation occurs when warm air comes into contact with a colder surface. The warm air cools down quickly and releases water droplets (condensation) on the surface. Condensation can also happen when there's too much moisture or not enough air flow or ventilation in your home.

As the weather turns colder, condensation can mean that mould forms. Severe condensation can lead to staining and mould on walls, window frames, furniture and clothing, and infestation by silverfish.

What can you do to prevent condensation and mould?

- Ensure that tumble dryers are correctly vented.
- Dry washing outside when possible and do not dry clothes over radiators.
- Do not block air vents.
- Open windows/use extractor fans in the kitchen/bathroom (and close the doors to these rooms) when cooking/bathing to let steam outside and not into the rest of your home.
- Open a window or trickle vent just enough to allow air flow.
- Move furniture away from external walls to allow air circulation and stop moist air being trapped and mould forming.
- Do not overfill wardrobes or cupboards, allow air circulation and stop moist air being trapped and mould forming.
- Keep your heating on low throughout the day in cold weather.
- If you do not have heating in every room, you could keep the doors of unheated rooms open to allow some heat into them.
- Cook with pan lids on.
- Wipe surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould forming.

What is damp?

Damp is not caused by condensation. Damp is usually caused by water getting in because of a broken damp proof course, missing pointing, cracked rendering or missing roof tiles.

If you have tried all of the above and are still experiencing a problem with damp, that is not caused by condensation, please contact Mears on **0800 023 4320**.

Advice on winter heating

Test your heating system before the cold weather sets in.

Make sure that your central heating system and boiler are working. If there are any problems, they can be fixed in time for colder weather. Pick a day when the weather gets colder to test your heating.

- Switch on the heating. Leave it on for at least four hours. This can be done on a low setting, gradually increasing the temperature to the winter setting.
- Test thermostats and radiator controls by turning them up and down.
- Test radiators by checking they are hot from top to bottom

How to bleed your radiators

If your radiators are not hot from top to bottom they may have air trapped inside. To release the air you can bleed your radiators by following these steps

1. Turn your heating on and wait for the radiators to warm up.
2. Identify which radiators need bleeding - radiators that are cold at the top or making gurgling noises will need bleeding.
3. Turn off your heating and wait for the radiator to cool.
4. Place a cloth below the radiator bleed valve.
5. Open the valve with a bleed key and release the air.
6. Close the valve once the hissing sound stops and water starts to leak out.
7. Check the boiler pressure. When you have finished, check your boiler's water pressure gauge. **If the boiler pressure is too low (below 1 bar), call Gas Call on 0800 012 9958** to repressurise the system. If the pressure is normal (between 1 and 2 bars), you can switch your heating on and check that your radiators are now heating up as they should.

If you have any problems please call GAS CALL on 0800 012 9958.



Calling all tenants!

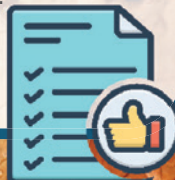
It's time to update your information

We are always striving to improve the service we provide. To do this we want to get to know you better. This helps us understand and respond to the diversity of our tenants and communicate with you in the best way.

It is important that you let us know if there are any changes within your household and the best way to contact you.

Over the coming months you will receive an email or text message from us with a link to an online 'Tenant Information Form'. We will write to those of you who are not online. Please complete the form by the closing date and we will enter you into a prize draw with a chance to win £100.

Completing the form will not affect or change your tenancy.



Contact the Tenant and Leaseholder Service

General housing enquiries

Call: 01843 577 262

Email: myhome@thanet.gov.uk

Household and communal repairs

Mears: 0800 023 4320

Gas, hot water and heating

Gas Call Services: 0800 012 9958

Visit [thanet.gov.uk/myhome](https://www.thanet.gov.uk/myhome) for more information

For all other Thanet District Council services

Call: 01843 577 000

Visit: [thanet.gov.uk](https://www.thanet.gov.uk)



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please get in touch by calling **01843 577090**.