

# Tenants' Annual Report

2020-2021



Lewes District Council



At the official opening, Councillors were given a guided tour of Saxonbury House development following extensive refurbishment of the historic building in Juggs Road, Lewes.

# The many ways that tenants can get involved...



- The Virtual 300
- Retirement Housing Forum
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE)
- Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD)
- Tenant Residents Associations
- Quality Checkers
- Scrutiny Panel
- Surveys/Questionnaires
- Communications Panel
- Focus Groups
- Community Pop-ups
- Annual Tenants' Day

For more information on how to get involved, please see pages 16/17.



## Introduction by Gary Hall Head of Homes First



Welcome to this year's Tenants' Annual Report.

We have had another busy and challenging year in Homes First. Much of this year has been about managing services during the pandemic and once again I can reflect on your patience and understanding through much of this and thank you for your support. Whilst there are still many concerns around Covid-19, we are gradually bringing our services back out to you, our customers, with a view to not only getting back to some sort of normality but also using the opportunity to reinvigorate Homes First services and improve our delivery to you. Much of our focus continues to be around sustainability work and connecting Housing with a healthy environment on our estates. It remains critical that we hear and act upon your voice in developing and shaping what we do. I would again encourage as many of you as possible to get involved through the range of options available to you.

We face several 'cost of living' challenges over the next few months, but please be assured that in Homes First we will do all we can, with partners, to support you and your families through this challenging period.

As always, we welcome your feedback on this and any other issues you wish to discuss around your home and Council Services.

Stay safe.

## Inside...

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# The **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard**

looks at how we **involve you** and **respond** to your needs

## How do we know?

In May 2020 a proposal to move to annual tenant surveys was approved using the HouseMark Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) system to determine levels of satisfaction and gather feedback and comment on all the Homes First service areas. HouseMark is a nationally recognised system used by around 350 social housing providers across the UK. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment (TIE) Panel which is made up of tenant representatives from Eastbourne and Lewes were consulted on the questions used, and the 12 they approved were used in the survey. Residents views are important to help us to improve our service, so we consult as regularly as we can through our forums, newsletters, and annual reviews.

The Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) are a group made up of tenant representatives from across the area. The Covid-19 pandemic made conventional meetings difficult last year, but the group rose to the challenge and continued to meet regularly by using Microsoft Teams to ensure sessions could be run safely. Despite the difficulties brought about by the pandemic, they were able to:

- Review Homes First performance across the Lewes District.
- Involve more tenants in local decision making and increase participation by using new technology.
- Approve a range of community improvement projects in general needs and retirement housing.

**73%** of you were satisfied with the overall service provided by Homes First in 2020 – 2021

- Help vulnerable tenants across the district get involved by funding laptops and training
- Review publications and policies to make sure they were clear and jargon free.
- Work with the local MP and Councillors to make sure tenant concerns were heard at the highest level
- Influence capital programme spending
- Review progress of the Charter for Social Housing Residents
- Elect a new tenant committee
- Update the TOLD website pages

## Did you know..?



One aim of the Tenant Involvement Strategy is to deliver excellent tenant involvement by making better use of technology, and due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this became a key priority. VITAL (The Virtual Involvement of Tenants and Leaseholders) was launched in July 2020 with the creation of the Virtual 300 online group. 74 Lewes District residents have joined so far and taken

part in consultations on new policies, service improvement ideas and even competition judging.

We've found that residents have enjoyed the flexibility of being involved in online activities as much or as little as they like, with the added incentive of points being awarded for their time, and a £50 prize given to the most active member every year. There's also the opportunity to be entered into regular draws for shopping vouchers and other prizes too. If you'd like to find out more, just email:

[tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**68.4%** of you said you were satisfied with the opportunities we offer to enable you to get involved

## Future plans

The Tenant Involvement team are working with Homes First and Neighbourhood First colleagues to organise Community Pop-Up events that give our staff the opportunity to meet and consult with tenants about the neighbourhood issues that concern them the most. Look out for Homes First gazebos and giveaways.

## Did you know..?

### TOLD Meeting – August 5 2021

The Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) committee manage a devolved budget of £20,000 which they use to fund communal and community improvements and initiatives. Last year 21 projects received funding, and these included communal garden improvements, landscaping, estate tidy ups, Christmas chocolates to retirement housing schemes, wheelchair accessible seating and donations to youth projects and a school uniform bank. If you'd like to find out more and apply to the community improvement budget, please email:

[tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)



**66.3%** of you were satisfied that Homes First listens to your views and acts upon them



Find the Tenants of Lewes District on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/lewesdistricttenants](https://www.facebook.com/lewesdistricttenants)

The **Homes Standard** looks at how we provide **homes** that are **safe**, good quality and well maintained

**98.01%** of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard

**73.4%** of you were satisfied with the standard of repairs that we carried out

**72.7%** of tenants were satisfied with the overall quality of their home

**7419** Responsive repairs completed, of which...

**1998** were urgent...

**1241** were emergency...

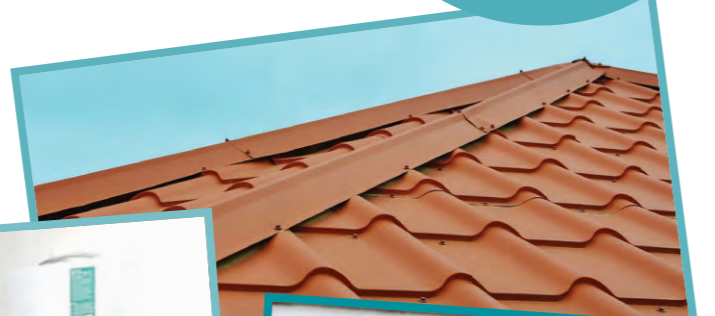
**3095** were routine

**How** are we doing?

We completed **7419** responsive repairs – **1998** were emergency, **1241** urgent and **3095** routine.

We also completed **25** replacement kitchens, **29** bathrooms, and **10** separate WCs.

The average amount spent on responsive repairs per property was **£552**. The average amount spent on planned improvements per property was **£862.49**.



**Future plans**

In 2020, a company called Faithorn Farrell and Timms (FFT) were instructed to complete a stock condition survey of all our Lewes District Council housing stock. The work was commissioned to give us an accurate breakdown of the type, age, and condition of our properties. Due to the global pandemic, it was difficult to gain access to every home, but despite this 72% of the housing stock was surveyed. Going forward Property Services will be recruiting an in-house Stock Condition Surveyor to look at the remaining 28% of our properties and finish the work. Once the exercise is completed, we will have a comprehensive picture of the overall stock condition which will be used to schedule planned maintenance works such as kitchen, bathroom, and window replacements.

As part of our Value for Money strategy, we will be reviewing our maintenance contracts to explore any opportunities for savings and efficiency gains to make sure our contract management is fit for purpose and delivering to our tenants. The Customer Experience Team and Property

**Did you know..?**

Our **Property Services Area Surveyors** are very experienced and undertake regular training on various technical issues to stay up to date with current guidance and technologies. They possess excellent knowledge and proven experience alongside the ability to analyse problems and identify solutions. There's rarely one typical day for a Maintenance Surveyor, and their work can involve everything from dealing with day-to-day repair issues, advising on structural repairs, dealing with planning applications, advising on property law, and keeping your home safe and secure.



- Services have helped support this initiative by working closely with Mears to identify ways to improve performance and ways of working. Weekly meetings have also been introduced with Mears to improve service and the customer experience. Homes First is committed to continuous improvement and to deliver this aim we collect key performance data monthly on the -
- Percentage of homes with a valid gas safety certificate
  - Percentage of domestic properties with EICR certificates up to five years old
  - Number of emergency repairs completed in month
  - Number of non-emergency repairs completed in month
  - Percentage of repairs completed right first time
  - Overall satisfaction with repairs

**Did you know..?**

Lewes District Council has **1319** houses, **279** bungalows, **1224** flats in **247** blocks, **397** retirement housing homes, **274** leasehold properties, **8** shared ownership homes and **61** garage blocks, managed by the Homes First team.

**If you have an emergency repair out of office hours you can still get the help you need:**

- For general emergency repairs you can use the main contact number which is **01273 471600** – listen for the out of hours message.
- For heating and hot water breakdowns only, you can call BSW Building Services on **01444 836036**.
- If there is a gas leak you can contact the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.



# The Tenancy Standard

looks at how we end tenancies, **manage** empty properties, and **allocate** homes

**Between** April 2020 and March 2021, we let **122** general needs homes:

- 3** Studio flats
- 44** One-bedroom flats, bungalows, and maisonettes
- 52** Two-bedroom flats, houses, and maisonettes
- 23** Three-bedroom houses

We also let **31** retirement housing flats, which included **17** one-bedroom flats, **6** two-bedroom flats and **8** studios.

42 tenants were helped to mutually exchange their home through HomeSwapper (the UK's leading exchange service for tenants).

In response to Covid-19, we also introduced SwapTracker, which extended the functionality of HomeSwapper with an online portal to manage the sharing of information. This helped tenants to track the progress of their mutual exchange application quickly and easily.



## Homeless Applications

We actively assisted **237** households homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2020/21 by providing advice and assistance, producing personal housing plans, signposting to services and, in some instances, offering loans. The outcome of every application is different depending on what the need is, but we successfully enabled **65** households to remain in existing accommodation or find a new property, and another **119** households were relieved from homelessness by the local authority taking reasonable steps to help the applicant secure suitable accommodation for at least six months. **35** households had a Main Housing Duty decision (i.e., they were provided temporary accommodation until this duty ended) or if owed Full Housing Duty they were offered temporary accommodation until settled accommodation could be identified. The others were found to have No Local Connection, Not in Priority Need, Not Eligible or Intentionally Homeless.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 we let **122** general-needs homes...

**44** One-bedroom flats, bungalows, and maisonettes...

**3** Studio flats...

**52** Two-bedroom flats, houses, and maisonettes, and...

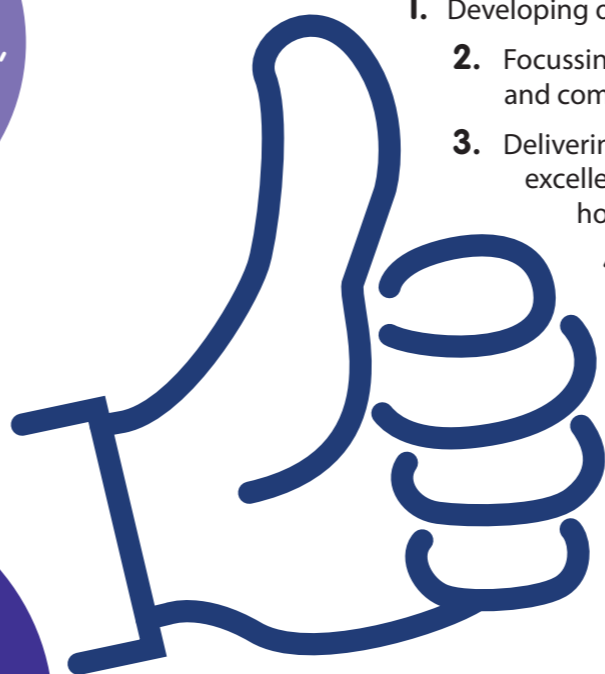
**23** Three-bedroom houses

**77.1%** of you said that you were satisfied with the safety and security of your home



## Future plans

Our new Value for Money Strategy will make sure our services work as efficiently and effectively as possible to provide our tenants with good quality homes. The strategy will also help us manage the challenges we continue to experience with the supply of materials for void work and staffing. When reviewing our strategic goals, we will make sure Value for Money commitments are addressed by:



1. Developing our people
2. Focussing on our customers and communities
3. Delivering operational excellence and quality homes
4. Providing good value
5. Ensuring a quality environment



Goal



## Rough Sleeping and Covid-19

'Everybody in' was a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) emergency directive to accommodate all rough sleepers in the Lewes District at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was followed by the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) which enabled Lewes District Council working with the County wide Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) to secure capital funding to purchase

accommodation used as Housing First – [hfe.homeless.org.uk](http://hfe.homeless.org.uk) – for former rough sleepers. Having worked closely with our partners to accommodate all rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic, our focus now is to secure more suitable move on and support for all those we have accommodated so far.

# The **Neighbourhood** and **Community Standard**

looks at how we **manage** and **improve** your neighbourhood and **deal with** anti-social behaviour

**We are active** in our communities and provide opportunities for our customers to engage positively, including, where possible, preventative measures relating to antisocial behaviour. Last year the tenancy management team helped to resolve **187** cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the Lewes District.

The team also completed **20** Hate and ASB Risk Assessments (HARA) with the Police, Adult Social Care, Mental Health, Children's Social Care, Victim Support and Drugs and Alcohol services. **27** 'formal tenancy actions' were taken to combat ASB, including Notices of Seeking Possession. There were also **32** referrals for safeguarding made, and **6** referrals for mediation delivered by the Brighton and Hove Independent Mediation Service: [www.bhims.org.uk](http://www.bhims.org.uk).



**78.2%**  
of tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

## Case study provided by the Brighton & Hove Independent Mediation Service

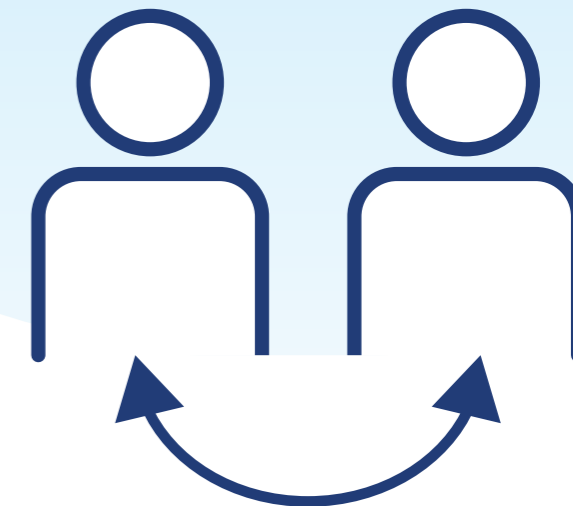
Communication between two neighbours had broken down, and both were making anti-social behaviour complaints against each other.

Their shared communal garden had been a source of tension and bad feeling, and this increased during the Covid-19 lockdown. Each tenant was willing to engage in mediation, so individual calls were arranged to let them speak about their situation. Person 1 suffered from anxiety and depression and felt their neighbour's actions were premediated and planned. Person 2 denied this but welcomed the mediation to explain how the allegations had made them feel. While both parties wished to continue the process, neither had access to video conferencing and face-to-face meetings were not

possible due to Covid-19 restrictions. The mediation team felt that shuttle mediation was not appropriate given the complex emotional issues at play, so more individual meetings were offered to discuss options and plan the next steps. Person 2 said that although they would be happy to have a mediation meeting with Person 1, they did not want to continue with

shuttle mediation. This was because they believed this would make things worse because Person 1 would not trust what was said in a message. Person 2 used their second call to talk through ways to reduce further conflict and respond calmly if more complaints were made. They told the mediator they felt much better for being able to talk things through.

Person 1 understood that the mediation could not continue, but was disappointed and concerned about the impact of ongoing stress on their wellbeing. They accepted an offer of three conflict coaching sessions which were used to talk about the different issues causing difficulties. This led to counselling for stress, a focus on wellbeing, and an undertaking not to take matters so personally. In the last conflict coaching session, Person 1 reported that things had been much quieter since the mediation, which had helped them gain perspective and avoid antagonising their neighbour. In a final call Person 2 also reported no recent issues with the neighbour and said talking to a mediator had helped reduce tension for both parties. Although face-to-face mediation was not possible in this case, both parties benefited from the process.



## Future plans

We are committed to providing excellent customer service with our residents at the heart of everything we do. We will monitor the impact of the new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy on our most vulnerable customers, and work with Adult Social Care to signpost and deliver services in support of our customers good mental health. No matter what your experience of our services, we welcome the opportunity to hear your views so we can learn and continually improve



**BRIGHTON & HOVE**  
Independent Mediation Service



# The Value for Money Standard

looks at how we collect rent and other charges and how we provide value for money

Homes First is subject to a range of regulations and standards it must achieve which are set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). These include an assessment on whether the auditor is satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. Consideration is given to financial sustainability and governance arrangements that demonstrate services are of value for taxpayers.

The three 'E's are the components of value for money:

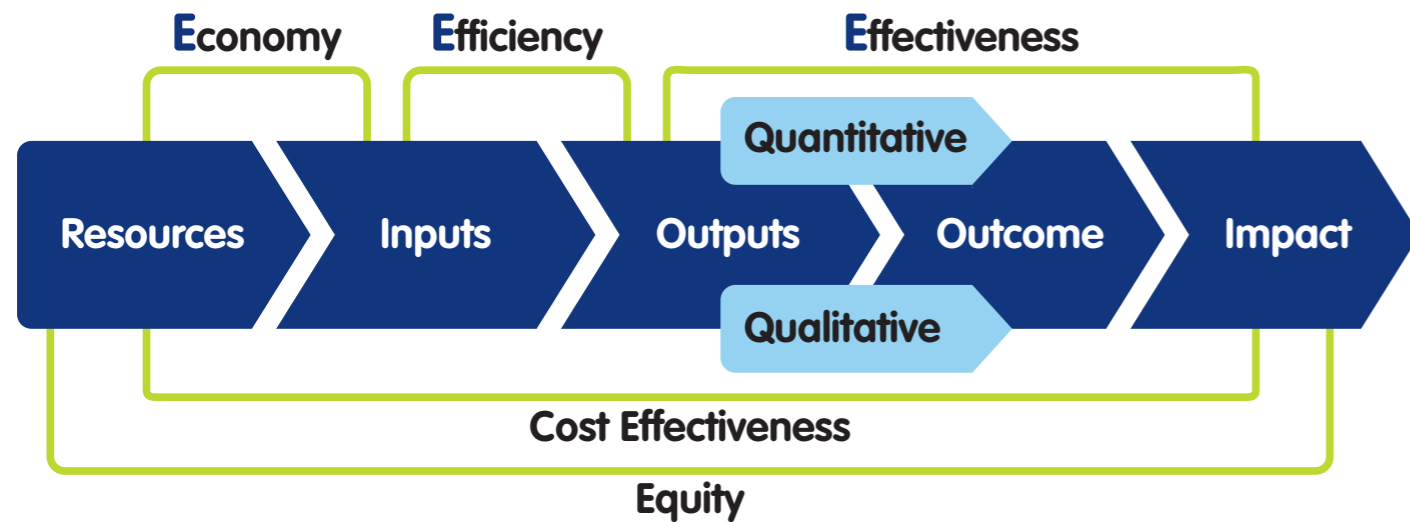
**Economy (Less)** – the price paid for what goes into providing a service. (for example, staff salaries, material costs).

**Efficiency (Well)** – a measure of productivity, i.e., how much you get out in relation to what is put in. (for example, the efficiency of services such as rent, and arrears collection may be measured by the cost of the service compared to the total rent collected).

**Effectiveness (Wisely)** – the outcome for customers. (for example, satisfaction levels among residents with tenant participation arrangements).

Therefore, value for money is high when there is an optimum balance between all three – relatively low costs, high productivity, and successful outcomes.

This diagram shows how the three 'E's link together to help services to demonstrate Value for Money...



## How are we doing?

We collected **96.18%** of our rent

**83.1%** of tenants were satisfied that their rent provided value for money.

The average weekly rent for a Lewes District Council property is **£91.70** (this is the average for all properties from bedsits to five bed houses).

The average weekly rent for properties in the Lewes District private rented sector is **£213.46** per week (Office of National Statistics).

**96.18%**  
Rent Collected

**83.1%**  
of tenants were satisfied that their rent provided value for money

**£91.70**  
The average weekly rent for Lewes District Council property

## Value for money strategy

We have developed a **Value for Money Strategy** to make sure that value for money is 'everyone's business' and at the heart of everything we do. The strategy will help us to understand the costs of our services, reduce these where possible, and improve performance and service delivery to increase customer satisfaction. In summary we will spend your money wisely and provide the best possible services to our customers.

## This is how we raised our income...



14,782,419	Dwelling Rents
364,194	Non-Dwelling Rents
1,205,754	Charges for Services
53,131	Contributions towards Expenditure
157,100	Community Amenities Contribution
<b>16,562,598</b>	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>

## How income is spent...

How much from each £100 raised is spent on repairs, management costs, etc.



£21.37	Housing Management
£28.28	Repairs and Maintenance
£24.10	Cyclical Maintenance
£5.39	Grounds Maintenance & Lighting
£2.03	Retirement Housing
£11.86	Service Borrowing
£0.90	Modernisation of IT Support
£1.92	Sundry Expenses
£4.15	Kept for Future Use

## Governance and Risk Management

Robust governance is essential to achieving Value for Money, so Homes First has arrangements in place to monitor performance and challenge risk through the Lewes District Council governance frameworks. In addition, residents can influence decisions, identify areas for improvement and review services through the Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD), the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment panel, the Virtual 300 and a range of surveys. Homes First has recruited a Quality & Value for Money Lead to report progress directly to the Head of Homes First and develop a Value for Money risk register in line with government Code of Practice.

## Future plans

We have plans to increase our housing stock in the Lewes District by 54 affordable energy efficient flats and houses. Councillors have agreed to implement three new technical advice notes (TAN) for developers that put a much greater focus on issues of sustainability, both in the planning phase of construction and when work is underway on site. The TAN cover sustainability, the circular economy and biodiversity and will apply to any new homes or commercial development, large or small, in the district.



# The Charter for Social Housing Residents

In November 2020, the Government unveiled the much-anticipated Social Housing White Paper – The Charter for Social Housing Residents – which brings together a range of measures aimed at improving the experience of people who live in social housing. There are seven chapters in the Charter which outline the things every social housing resident should expect from their landlord:

1. Being safe in your home.
2. Knowing how your landlord is performing.
3. Having your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
4. Being treated with respect.
5. Having your voice heard by your landlord.
6. Having a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.
7. Being supported to take your first step to home ownership.

Whilst some aspects of The Charter require legislation before they can be implemented, over the last year Homes First has been preparing by:

- Commencing a full Stock Condition Survey
- Implementing a range of safety works to proactively address the anticipated requirements of the White Paper and the Building Safety Bill which will bring a new accountability and make clear where the responsibility for managing safety risks lies through the design, construction, and occupation of buildings in scope – [www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-building-safety-bill](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-building-safety-bill)
- Developing a Homes First Performance Management Framework with improved data gathering and reporting that aims to improve performance and enable us to share



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information about how we are performing to you.

- Establishing the Customer Experience Team, whose remit draws together many of the key aspects of The Charter (Performance Management and Reporting, Complaints, Pro-active Consumer Regulation, Tenant Involvement).
- Working towards publishing a new Tenant Involvement Strategy for 2022-2025.

from complaints to implement practical solutions to poor service standards and service failures.

- The Customer Experience Team and involved residents will assess the feasibility of establishing a Residents Complaints Panel to support service and performance improvement.
- During 2021-22, Homes First will work with involved residents to develop its own charter and set out a range of service commitments which meet or exceed anticipated regulatory expectations.

## Complaints handling

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Lewes District Council, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents. Anyone who uses or receives a service or is affected by a service from any part of Lewes District Council, can complain. We try our best to resolve any complaints we receive informally, but sometimes this is just not possible. When a formal complaint is made, this is allocated to a member of our Customer Experience Team so that a stage 1 investigation can take place and hopefully a resolution found. In situations where a

customer is dissatisfied with the result of the stage 1 process, they can request a second stage 2 investigation, but this usually requires more information to explain the reason for dissatisfaction with the investigation that has already been carried out. We received **138** complaints last year, **15** of which went to a stage 2. **37** of the complaints were about poor service, **20** were about staff or contractors, and **14** were about repeated service failures.



**15** complaints were partly upheld  
i.e., we acknowledged some fault or breakdown in our service

**10** complaints were upheld  
i.e., we acknowledged that we were at fault and worked to remedy the issue

**26** complaints were investigated but not upheld  
i.e., we felt that our service had been delivered appropriately

**in 77** cases our Customer Experience Team managed to reach an informal resolution of the complaint

Overall, **44%** of our complaints were closed within our target times.

To improve our service and make sure your complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly, we have:

- Worked with Mears to improve service and customer experience, and introduced weekly meetings.

- Worked closely with Mears to identify ways to improve performance and ways of working.
- Reviewed and improved the handover process and communications between repairs and major works teams.
- Reminded Mears and their sub-contractors to issue

appointments in a timely manner when works orders are provided.

- Restructured the Housing Needs and Standards Team to deliver a focus on customer experience and address backlogs which have led to complaints.
- Begun developing staff training to improve customer service and better identify the communication needs of our residents.

We value customer complaints and see them as valuable feedback that we can use to improve our services. If you need to make a formal complaint you can use an online form on the website:

[www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/about-the-councils/make-a-complaint/](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/about-the-councils/make-a-complaint/)

**NOTE:** 10 of the complaints logged during 2019/2020 were closed during 2020/2021 which explains why the outcomes figure is 128.



## Future plans

- For 2021-2022, we have increased the capacity of the Homes First Customer Experience Team to ensure complaints are addressed within the timescales detailed in our Corporate Complaints Procedure.

We will continue to work closely with colleagues, Mears and all our contractors to improve complaints handling times and will aim to make initial contact within 24 hours of a complaint being logged.

- We will implement the Resident Scrutiny Team's Complaints Improvement Plan to effectively respond to their recommendations.
- Customer Experience Specialist Adviser's will support Homes First colleagues to improve performance and customer experience, using learning lessons



# There are many ways to get involved and make a difference

There are many ways to get involved and make a difference

## The Virtual 300

The Virtual 300 is a way you can get involved and have your say without leaving home. We regularly email members to ask what they think about new policies, service improvement ideas and even competition entries. You can get involved as much or as little as you like, but to encourage involvement we give a £50 prize to the most active member every year.



Jacqui Astridge from Eastbourne with her prize for being the most active Virtual 300 member

## Report it

You can provide quick and easy feedback by using the 'Report It' app on your mobile when you're out and about. Just use the app to provide a photo of the issue and the location so that it can be directed straight away to the right member of Neighbourhood First staff



## Transactional surveys

We have developed a 'moment in time' feedback approach to capture your thoughts on a service you have received. Asking for feedback when the experience is fresh in your mind gives us great insight and helps to improve and develop our services. We are currently running

transactional surveys for our complaints service and planned maintenance works via email and text.

## Communications Panel

This forum helps us make sure that our newsletters and reports are easy to understand and free of jargon and mistakes.

## Focus Groups

These are informal, but structured discussion groups with other tenants which allow you to share your views and shape key services, such as our allocations process.

## Community Pop Ups

Look out for our Homes First gazebo at community events and local consultations. Our staff will be on hand to chat to you about issues in your local community.

## Annual Tenants Day

Every year we aim to hold an event which all tenants are welcome to attend, like our Annual Conference for example. This is a great way to keep up to date with our services, meet the teams, and network with other tenants.

## Quality Checkers

We are piloting an approach to involve residents in checking the quality of our communal cleaning service in retirement housing. Once the pilot is complete, we will review how it went and explore how to



extend the approach to other schemes – watch this space!

## Tenant Involvement and Empowerment (TIE) Panel

TIE Panel members work with senior managers to discuss issues affecting tenants across the Lewes District and Eastbourne to make sure that tenant interests are fully considered in all aspects of strategic decision making. We are actively looking for Lewes District representatives on this strategic group.

## The Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD)

TOLD represents the views of tenants from the Lewes District. The TOLD committee meets quarterly to discuss topical housing issues and Homes First performance. Open meetings are also held twice a year to which guest speakers are invited. The committee also manages a Community Improvements Budget of £20,000 which tenants can apply to for project funding which benefits their community.

## Tenant and Resident Associations

There are several tenant resident associations operating in the Lewes District that you can join, or we can help you set up your own.

## Tenant Scrutiny Team

Tenant-led scrutiny reviews are overseen by the TIE Panel, who commission trained tenants to carry out in-depth service reviews on a service area, such as repairs. The scrutiny team make evidence-based recommendations to the Homes First Senior Leadership Team, and agree improvement plans, which are monitored by the TIE panel.

## Retirement Housing Forum

We hope to agree a joint retirement housing forum which will work across the Lewes District and Eastbourne made up of representatives from all the retirement housing schemes. Every April members are elected to represent and discuss the views and specific needs of their scheme at the forum.

## Benefits of getting involved...

Tenant members of our scrutiny team have made several recommendations to improve our services. Recently they worked with Property Services on ways to make it possible for tenants to report and track the progress of communal repairs. They also recommended changes that have been adopted to help us speed up how we deal with complaints.

Tenants who join our tenant groups are best placed to make local improvements in their communities. Successes have included setting up a foodbank, organising litter picks, planting trees, landscaping communal gardens, organising community events like BBQs, and establishing community growing areas.

We will continue to offer hybrid meetings, giving tenants the opportunity to meet face-to-face or join meetings online using Microsoft Teams.

The **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE)** meets three times a year – 2022 dates to be confirmed.



The **Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD)** committee is elected annually and meets on a quarterly basis in March, June, September, and December. Open Meetings are also programmed three times a year. The **Landport Residents Association** meets six times a year

on a Wednesday evening – 2022 dates to be confirmed.

The **Retirement Housing Forum** made up of tenant representatives from retirement housing schemes also meets regularly – 2022 dates to be confirmed.

## Someone who made a difference...

### In Memorium – David Pickbourne

It is with sadness that that I must report the passing of David Pickbourne who lived in retirement housing on Newton Road in Lewes. David was a kind man who gave much of his time to volunteer at many tenant events over the years. Despite suffering from several chronic health conditions, he was a dedicated member of Landport Residents Association and rarely missed helping to get things ready for their Foodbank on a Monday. He also attended their LRA meetings, helped with the litter picks and before Covid-19 changed everything, he volunteered at the Landport Community Cafe, served teas at the Lewes Repair Cafe, and helped with the annual Summer BBQ. David was also a long-standing member of the TOLD (Tenants of Lewes District) committee. He was a dear friend to me, and I, like many others that knew him well, will miss him very much. RIP David.



Debbie Twitchen, Chair LRA



# Useful Information



## Money Helper

**Money Helper**  
[www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)  
 Tel: 0800 0113797

An independent service that provides free, unbiased money advice on credit cards, loans, mortgages, insurance, pensions, savings & investments, tax and benefits. You can chat online or by telephone.



**Citizens Advice Bureau**  
[www.cab.org.uk](http://www.cab.org.uk)

**Adviceline (England) 0800 144 8848**  
 Gives advice on managing debt, bankruptcy, mortgage problems, credit problems, enforcement agents (bailiffs), debt management companies, court action for debt, budgeting and more.



**National Debtline**  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

**Tel: 0808 808 4000 / Webchat also available**  
 Gives free, confidential, and independent advice to people with debt problems.



**Step Change**  
[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

**Tel: 0800 138 1111 / Webchat also available**  
 Offers free advice to help people who are in financial difficulty.



**The Debt Support Trust**  
[www.debtsupporttrust.org.uk](http://www.debtsupporttrust.org.uk)

**Tel: 0800 085 0226**  
 This charity gives expert debt advice and support if you are struggling to manage your debts.



**Age UK – Money Matters**  
[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)  
**Tel: 0800 678 1602**  
 Independent money management and benefits advice.



**Debt Advice Foundation**  
[www.debtadvicefoundation.org](http://www.debtadvicefoundation.org)  
**Tel: 0800 043 40 50**  
 Offers free, confidential advice on any aspect of debt.



**Wave Community Bank** (East Sussex Credit Union)  
[www.wavecb.org.uk](http://www.wavecb.org.uk)  
**Tel: 0300 303 3188**  
 A not-for-profit savings and loans co-operative helping you to save money and offer cost effective and flexible loans, which meet your individual needs.

**Welfare Benefits Helpline**  
**0333 344 0681** (call cost no more than national rate calls)  
 Benefits advice.



**Foodbanks**  
 There are a number of foodbanks operating in the Lewes District, but please note that everyone needs to be referred by an approved referral agency to receive help.

**Landport Foodbank**  
 Email: [debbietwitchen@googlemail.com](mailto:debbietwitchen@googlemail.com)  
 2A Horsfield Road, Landport, Lewes BN7 2TA

**Fitzjohn's Foodbank**  
 Email: [fitzjohnsfoodbank@gmail.com](mailto:fitzjohnsfoodbank@gmail.com)  
 Christ Church, Prince Edward's Road, Lewes BN7 1BL

**Malling Foodbank**  
 Email: [briankcfrench@gmail.com](mailto:briankcfrench@gmail.com)  
 King's Church, Brooks Road, Lewes, BN7 2BY

**Seahaven Foodbank**  
 Email: [enquiries.info@sussexcommunity.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.info@sussexcommunity.org.uk)  
 31A High Street, Newhaven, BN9 9PD

**Ringmer Foodbank**  
 Email: [ringmerfoodbank@btinternet.com](mailto:ringmerfoodbank@btinternet.com)  
 The Library, Ringmer Village Hall, Ringmer, Lewes, BN8 5QH



## Trouble with energy costs?

Living in a cold home can harm your health and make health conditions like heart problems and asthma in children worse.

The East Sussex Warm Home Check service is available all year round and offers free telephone advice and money



saving tips for anyone struggling to afford to keep warm at home. You can apply for a Warm Home Check service by texting **WARM** to **80011**, or by calling **0800 464 7307**. There's also a



website with lots of helpful information - [www.warmeastsussex.org.uk](http://www.warmeastsussex.org.uk)

# Not Costing the Earth



## HOMES FIRST

Working together to reduce our carbon footprint

This project has been developed to promote cost effective carbon reducing resources and support that tenants are interested in, which include:

- Growing food at home and Community Growing projects
- Food security, seasonal eating, your food carbon footprint, and upskilling
- Reducing Food Waste
- Biodiversity
- Sustainable transport
- Household energy saving

To find out more and get involved, email **Jo Wunsch**, Community Development and Sustainability Advisor, on: [jo.wunsch@ad.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:jo.wunsch@ad.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)



**Housing Justice**  
[www.housingjustice.org.uk/get-help](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/get-help)  
**Tel: 0808 800 4444**

If you are experiencing homelessness or you are at risk of homelessness it is important that you speak to an expert who can give you accurate advice about your situation.

## Did you know..?

**The Customer Service Team answered 104,764 calls from Lewes District customers this year.**

In addition, **26,000** webchats were conducted, **73,127** emails were received, and **16,500** documents and letters were scanned by the team.

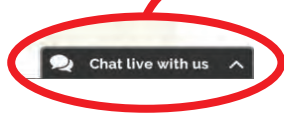
# Useful Contacts



**Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic,** a reduced number of Customer Advisors have been available to answer telephone calls. To enable us to assist customers who cannot access online services, we would ask all tenants who can do so, to report issues via our website – [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) – and follow the links to the online service you need or use the **Webchat** option.

## With our **Webchat** service, you can avoid the call queues in our busiest periods!

**Webchat** is a fast and easy way to contact the Councils for assistance and to get the information you need. Operators are available between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday and will be able to assist with quick-queries or direct you to webpages with the information you need. Between these times, you can access our webchat service from any page on the website; just click on the 'Chat live with us' tab at the bottom right of the page to start a chat with an Advisor. You will need an email address, but you don't need to sign up for an account. You can even request a copy of the chat transcript to be sent to you, so that you can easily refer to any instructions or information you are given. Just head over to [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) to give it a go.



## Lewes District Council main number:

# 01273 471600

**Option 2** – For repairs, including communal repairs. Please note that for emergency repairs after 5pm or at weekends (including heating) you will then need to also select Option 1.

**Option 3** – Council tax queries and paying council tax – except council tax reduction.

**Option 4** – Benefit enquiries and council tax reduction.

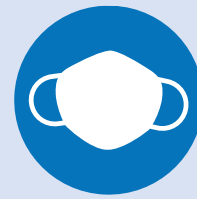
**Option 5** – Planning.

**Option 6** – For anything else.

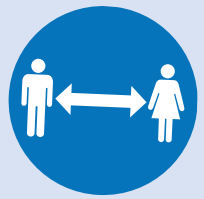
## Covid-19 remains a serious health risk.



**HANDS**



**FACE**



**SPACE**

You should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

Let fresh air in if you meet indoors. Meeting outdoors is safer.

Wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

Get tested and self-isolate if required to.

If you haven't already, get vaccinated.

## Emergency numbers:



- Gas leak: **0800 111 999**
- Electricity power cut: **105**
- Mains water leaks: **0333 000 0365**
- Homelessness  
After 5pm or at weekends: **01323 410000**

## Other useful numbers:

- Non-emergency police: **101**
- NHS Non-emergency **111**
- East Sussex County Council: **0345 608 0190** for highways issues such as road maintenance, pavements and street lighting, adult social care, mental health services, schools and education services, grass verge cutting.
- Shelter – Housing advice: **0808 800 4444**
- Samaritans – **116 123**