



December 2024
Issue 13

Spring 2020

Tenants' Open Voice

for tenants of Lewes District and Eastbourne
Brought to you with the help of our tenant Communications Panel



Updating your
information
helps us shape
the services we deliver.

See page 11

Highlights inside...

The Tenant Voice	pg 2
Why do slips, trips and falls increase in winter?	pg 3
Fraud impacts all areas of society	pg 3
Check what benefits you can get	pgs 4
Stay warm and well	pg 4
Bleeding your radiators	pg 5
Tenant satisfaction measures	pg 6
Smoke alarms	pg 8
Crossword - Win shopping vouchers	pg 9
Legionnaires disease	pg 10

HOMES FIRST



EASTBOURNE
Borough Council

lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

The Tenant Voice



Reny Pulling

Council Tenant

Hi, I'm Reny Pulling, and I live in a retirement bungalow in Peacehaven. I first

became an involved tenant in 2009 when I lived in an Eastbourne Homes property.

Due to my declining health, I moved from Eastbourne to Peacehaven seven years ago to be near my family, so I have some experience of both councils.

At present I am interim Chair of Lewes District Council Retirement Housing

Forum, a TOLD Committee member and I recently joined the new Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standards group and work alongside Council officers to make sure tenants are treated fairly, able to voice their concerns, influence decisions, and hold the Council accountable.

The things I care most about are how Homes First communicates with us and making sure tenants maximise their income by claiming all the benefits they are entitled to.

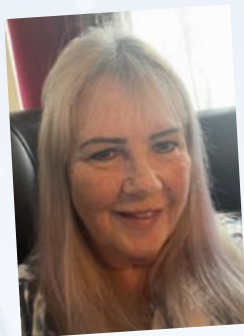
You might ask what progress has been made over the last 15 years? Looking back at the way tenants were once treated compared to how they

are involved now, I would say that things have changed enormously!

But I'm getting old now, and we need new blood so why not join in? There's so much free training available nowadays when you get involved, which can also help you in all aspects of life.

You can make a difference – all it takes is a lot of people doing a lot of small things. These are our homes so let's take all the opportunities we can to make them better.

**All the best
Reny**



Jacqui Astridge

Council Tenant

Hello, my name is Jacqui Astridge and I'm a Council tenant living in Langney who is

deeply passionate about trying to make a difference in our community.

I get involved as much as I can because I believe that bringing communities together as a large family is a good way to help others through these difficult times.

It's especially important that the areas we live in are cared for and kept clean because they have such an impact on our sense of wellbeing, and that's why I go to as many Council meetings as possible. The Council can't fix things if they don't know they're broken so having our voices heard is one way to make a difference.

I am a member of the Eastbourne Area Panel which does lots of great work locally, and I recently joined the new Safety & Quality Consumer Standards group which works with Council officers to monitor work on repairs, health and safety and stock quality. I also volunteer with the Family Fun Gatherers Group at the Langney Community Centre, but more of that later. I believe that as many tenants as possible should come along

to Council meetings to help improve our areas and have their voices heard, because even though the Council has little money, everyone can contribute time and ideas to make things better.

Last of all, I want to make a pitch for the wonderful Langney Community Centre, which I wholeheartedly support. It's really trying to make a difference in my area, and here are just a few of the many activities taking place:

- Once a month we hold a Bingo Session in the evening.
- There's an After School Club during term time – 3.30pm to 4.40pm on a Wednesday.
- There's a Little Cubs Toddler Group on a Wednesday year-round between 10.30am and 12pm.
- A Friendship Club meets on a Thursday between 1pm and 3pm.

There are also Halloween and Christmas parties for the children and crafting sessions run by the Scrap Store.

Find the 'Family Fun Gatherers' on Facebook or check out the notice board outside the centre for all the activities.

Please help us to make our community a better place to live in!

**Best wishes
Jacqui**





Why do slips, trips and falls increase in winter



There are a number of reasons why slip and trip accidents increase in the winter...

The days are shorter, which means less daylight and reduced visibility, plus there are fallen slippery leaves on the pavements and sometimes ice and snow.

Here are some top tips to help you avoid having an accident:

▲ Be careful when getting in or out of your car.

Pay attention to your surroundings as you get in or out of your car. Take care shifting your weight and hold onto the car for support. Always avoid putting your hands in your pockets so your arms help to keep you balanced.

▲ Scan the path ahead of you to spot hazards

Walk carefully and keep checking

ahead to spot any hazards such as fallen leaves, uneven ground, or patches of ice.

▲ Keep an eye out for black ice

Watch out for ground that could be slippery and test it with one leg firmly grounded to see if it's safe to walk on.

▲ Avoid carrying items that are heavy or that make it difficult to see ahead of you

Whether you're carrying one big item or several smaller ones, ask for help to avoid injury. Always take multiple trips so you can always see where you're going.

▲ Walk slowly and with small steps

Lean slightly forward and take short steps to make sure your centre of gravity is directly above your feet as much as possible. Make sure your footing is secure with each step before taking the next one.

▲ Wear the right shoes

Shoes or boots with rubber or neoprene soles give a better grip than those with plastic or leather soles. Try to avoid heels, opting instead for flat shoes. In extreme weather, use boots with cleats or abrasive soles designed for ice and snow.

▲ If you do slip, avoid using your arms to break your fall

If you do slip, avoid using your arms to break your fall. If you can't stop falling, try not to stretch out your arms to brace yourself, but instead relax your body and aim to fall on fleshy areas like your thighs or buttocks. Bend your head forward to avoid hitting it on the ground and try to roll as you land to spread the impact.

FRAUD impacts all areas of society from large institutions to individuals...

You might be aware that International Fraud Awareness week took place in November to try and reduce the enormous impact of fraud by promoting anti-fraud awareness and education.

Some facts:

- The Public Sector Fraud Authority estimates that fraud costs the UK public services between £39.8 billion and £58.5 billion every year.
- The National Crime Agency reports fraud accounts for over 40% of all reported crime in England and Wales but receives less than 1% of police time.
- There were 3.6 million incidents of fraud experienced by individuals between June 2023 – June 2024.
- For every 1000 estimated frauds committed there is one successful prosecution.

To help tackle this epidemic, the government has released a toolkit which contains useful information on how to protect yourself and others from the risk of fraud. You can see the toolkit on this website: www.stopthinkfraud.campaign.gov.uk.



Lewes and Eastbourne Councils are working hard to target fraudsters who can directly impact the money we have available for the services we deliver.

Fraud prevention work within Housing, Revenues and Welfare saved £4.5 million and generated £450k in additional income in 2023/24.

If you would like to report a fraud concerning the Councils, rest assured that information can be provided anonymously and will be treated with strict confidentiality.

More information including an online form to report a fraud can be found on our website by typing 'report fraud' into the search box. We also have a dedicated free hotline number: **0800 731 7039**.

Check what benefits you can get

If you're struggling with the cost of living, you should check if you can claim benefits or increase your current benefits.

You might be able to claim certain benefits even if you work, have savings or own a home.

Using a benefits calculator can help you see what benefits you might get and how much money you could get. To get an accurate answer, you'll need information about your savings, income, pension, childcare payments and any existing benefits for you and your partner, if you have one.

turn2us Tackling financial insecurity together.

For a quick overview of what help you might be able to get, you can use the Turn2us benefits calculator www.benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk

entitledto
independent | accurate | reliable

For a more detailed check you could use the Entitledto benefits calculator - www.entitledto.co.uk

To find out about the full range of benefits that are available, take a look at the Citizens Advice website - www.citizensadvice.org.uk - simply type 'benefits introduction' into the search box.

citizens advice

Or if you prefer a face-to-face chat, why not contact your local Citizens Advice and arrange to see someone in person:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/

Stay warm & well



Now that we're into the colder months, here's some guidance to help you stay safe, warm and well.

Preparing for bad weather

- Stock up on the essentials to avoid unnecessary trips outside. This includes making sure all your prescriptions are up to date or arranging for them to be delivered.
- Ask someone you can trust to help with shopping, getting medications or anything else you might need.
- Get to know your neighbours in case of an emergency.
- Keep a list of useful contacts – just in case.
- Keep torches, a battery-powered radio and spare batteries where they are easy to find in case of a power cut.
- Remember to keep your phone charged.
- Remind yourself where your water stopcock, trip switches and electricity and gas meters are.

Stay warm

- Have plenty of hot drinks and keep a flask handy if your mobility is limited.
- Set the heating to come on at regular times and keep your home to at least 18°C, especially in rooms you spend more time in.
- Keep windows closed at night to reduce the risk of chest infections.
- Wear layers of cosy clothing or thermals to trap warmth.
- Check your pipes are adequately lagged and your roof is properly insulated.
- Use a hot water bottle but be careful with boiling water.

There are benefits, grants and discounts you might be entitled to, such as pension credits, winter fuel payments and home insulation. For further information visit gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment or ofgem.gov.uk and click on 'Information for consumers' and 'Energy advice for households' If you have any concerns about your energy bills, Citizens Advice (in England and Wales) can offer further advice. Call **0808 223 1133** or visit: citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us

Energy saving ideas

- Put lids on your pans while cooking.
- Turn off lights and switch appliances off from standby when not in use
- Turn the thermostat down by one degree (it should be set between 18-21°C)
- Only fill the kettle with the amount of water you need.
- Swap to energy-saving light bulbs.

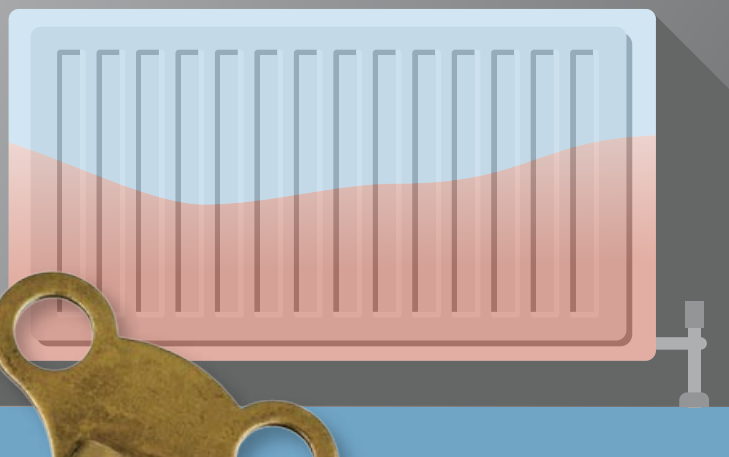
Money saving ideas

- Use a budget tracker to keep track of money coming in and out each month.
- Check whether you're entitled to grants or benefits.
- Plan your meals, make a shopping list and stick to it.
- Batch cook, freeze leftovers and use airtight containers in the fridge to keep food fresh for longer.
- Swap fresh fruit and veg for tinned or frozen – this can be more cost effective and provide the same nutrients.
- Keep an eye out for deals and offers in-stores.
- For extra money saving tips visit: www.moneysavingexpert.com

Bleeding your radiators

COLD
at the
top

HOT
at the
bottom



Over time, air can accumulate inside your heating system, causing pockets of trapped air within the radiators. This trapped air prevents hot water from circulating effectively, leading to cold spots and reduced heating efficiency.

By bleeding your radiators, you release the trapped air, allowing hot water to flow freely and evenly throughout the system, maximising its performance.

If you feel any cold spots

Bleeding a radiator is required if it is not working as efficiently or as effectively as you want it to. You can tell if this is the case by feeling the surface of your radiator. In many cases, you'll find a cold spot around the top of the radiator surface and sometimes your radiator won't be getting hot at all. If you experience anything like this with your radiators, the chances are that you'll need to take steps to remove the air by bleeding the radiator.

If your radiator is making noises

Another signal that you may have air building up and need to bleed your radiator is when you can hear clanging or prolonged groaning when you switch on your central heating. There could be other reasons, but usually it's because you need to bleed your radiators.

To successfully bleed your radiator, you will need a radiator key (such as the one shown above). This is a specialised tool designed to fit into the bleed valve, allowing you to open it easily. If you don't have a radiator key, you could also use a flat-head screwdriver.

Here's a step-by-step guide for bleeding hot water radiators for guidance only, if you'd like to try:

1. Turn off the heating system

Before starting, make sure to turn off your heating system. This ensures your safety and prevents any accidental burns from hot water.

2. Identify the radiator bleed valve

Locate the bleed valve on your radiator. The bleed valve is usually located at the top of the radiator, on one side. It resembles a small square or hexagonal nut.

3. Prepare for Bleeding

Place a towel or washing up bowl below the bleed valve to catch any water that may drip out during the process. This prevents any water from staining your flooring or carpets.

4. Insert the Radiator Key

Insert the radiator key into the bleed valve and turn it counter-clockwise. You should hear a hissing sound as the trapped air begins to escape.

5. Release Trapped Air

As the hissing sound stops and water starts to trickle out of the bleed valve, it indicates that the trapped air has been released. Once a steady stream of water appears, close the bleed valve by turning the radiator key clockwise.

6. Check for Leaks

After bleeding the radiator, inspect the bleed valve for any signs of leakage. If you notice any leaks, tighten the bleed valve gently until the leak stops – but be very careful not to overtighten as this may damage the "O" ring and could lead to further problems.

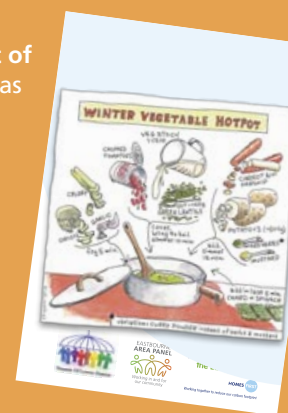
The Community Improvement Budget

The committees of LET (Listening to Eastbourne Tenants) & TOLD (Tenants of the Lewes District) both have access to a pot of money they can spend locally to support their local communities. In the past the money has been used to make a difference in many different ways and it still can! Examples given the green light by tenants include walking cricket programmes, solar lighting, supporting community growing and foodbanks, community libraries, energy vouchers to tackle fuel poverty, and outdoor activities for children to name only a few.

If you have an idea, large or small, which you'd like TOLD or LET to consider then please do get in touch. All you have to do is contact tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk with your idea and ask for an application form.

The Community Living Well Cost of Living Guide was published in February 2023 and distributed to tenants in Eastbourne and the Lewes District with issue #7 of Tenants' Open Voice. The magazine was co-authored by tenants and funded by the Community improvement budget. The magazine is packed full of useful information and tips that are still relevant in these challenging times.

If you'd like a copy please email: tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk with your address and we'll get one sent to you



Tenant Satisfaction Measures



HOMES FIRST

The Government's Regulator of Social Housing introduced a system of landlord assessment last year which uses Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that can be reported to tenants in a way which makes it easier for you to understand how we are doing.



To help us with the system of assessment, we commissioned a company called Acuity to complete TSM surveys with our tenants in the Lewes District and Eastbourne to provide information on your opinions of, and attitudes towards, us (your landlord) and the services we deliver.

The surveys take about 10 minutes to complete and if you're selected at random you'll get a call from 01273 093 939 (a Brighton Area code) between 9am and 8pm from Monday to Friday. Don't worry if you miss the call because they'll leave a recorded message.

There are two types of survey:

- **Perception survey**

Acuity calls a random sample of tenants each quarter to ask 12 questions to measure and understand your opinions, and perceptions regarding our services.

- **Transactional surveys**

Acuity calls a random sample to ask about your actual experience of a service transaction for repairs, major works, complaints, or anti-social behaviour.

Consent to share personal information

Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council are data controllers who collect and process personal information about you in order to provide services. In order to do this we sometimes collect and share information with 'third parties' such as Mears, our repairs contractor, or in this case Acuity Research and Practice.

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires that data controllers like Councils explain how we use and share your information. A privacy notice is one way to do this, and you can see ours on the website – www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk Simply search for it by using the key words 'privacy notice' in the search our website box.

Tenancy audits are taking place

We've recently been undertaking some tenancy audits so we can better understand the needs of our tenants and provide the right mix of services. The visits have also given us the chance to pick up on property related issues, and allowed tenants the opportunity to talk to us face to face about issues they might want to discuss.

The visits involve the completion of a short questionnaire, some ID checks, and a quick look at all the rooms in the property. All our officers will show you their photo ID before asking to come into your home, but if you have any concerns, just contact us.

Occasionally we might 'cold call' if we're in the area, but usually we'll arrange appointments in advance and can always rearrange if the time isn't convenient for you.

A new approach to governance



After consulting LET (*Listening to Eastbourne Tenants*) and TOLD (*Tenants of the Lewes District*) a revised governance structure to the one described in the last issue of Tenants' Open Voice has been agreed.

Five consumer standards groups made up of tenant representatives and officers will now monitor the Councils' compliance with the new regulations the Social Housing Regulation Act now requires. In a nutshell, the new standards are designed to protect tenants and improve the service they receive. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) also now has powers which allow it to use a more proactive consumer regulation approach involving regular inspections. The five consumer standards are:

The Safety and Quality Homes Standard focuses on making sure that we understand the condition of all of our homes and that we make use of this information to provide safe, quality homes.

The Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard requires us to be transparent with you and treat everyone fairly and

respectfully so everyone can access services. Tenants must also be able to voice their concerns where necessary, influence decisions, and hold us, their landlord, accountable

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard requires us to engage with all relevant parties to ensure you live in secure, well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in your homes.

The Tenancy Standard outlines how we must go about the fair allocation and letting of homes, as well as the requirements for managing tenancies.

The Rent Standard prescribes how we set and increase rents for all our housing stock in line with government policy.

If you'd like to have your say, make a difference and make sure the tenant voice is heard, please email: tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk so we can provide more information or arrange an informal chat to talk about the opportunities available.



Lewes District Council

Overall Satisfaction

Last Quarter **62%** **63%**



Quality of home
Last Quarter 71%
77%



Well maintained home
Last Quarter 63%
62%



Safe home
Last Quarter 74%
76%



Repairs - Last 12 months
Last Quarter 66%
76%



Time taken - last repair
Last Quarter 62%
70%



Repairs & Maintenance
Last Quarter 61%
59%



Communal area clean
and well maintained
Last Quarter 57%
52%



Positive contribution
to neighbourhood
Last Quarter 58%
64%



Handling of
anti-social behaviour
Last Quarter 50%
62%



Easy to deal with
Last Quarter 62%
60%



Listen and acts
Last Quarter 58%
65%



Kept informed
Last Quarter 75%
76%



Treated fairly and
with respect
Last Quarter 74%
77%



Complaints handling
Last Quarter 29%
27%

Overall satisfaction is very similar to the last quarter at 63%, and higher satisfaction was recorded this time for the quality of the home and how Lewes District Council treats its tenants (both 77%). The provision of a safe home, the repairs service, and keeping tenants informed about things also increased to 76% satisfaction, but some measures received ratings below 60% - overall repairs & maintenance service (59%), the upkeep of the communal areas (52%) and handling of complaints 27%.



Two-thirds of tenants were satisfied with the overall services provided by Eastbourne Borough Council in quarter 2. The highest satisfaction was for the quality of the home and treating tenants fairly and with respect – both 77%. Most measures had satisfaction levels in the 60 - 70% range but some fell below this - the maintenance of the communal areas (56%) the handling of ASB, listening to tenants' views and acting upon them (both 53%) and complaints (17%).

Overall Satisfaction

Last Quarter **68%** **66%**



Quality of home
Last Quarter 70%
77%



Well maintained home
Last Quarter 60%
68%



Safe home
Last Quarter 67%
75%



Repairs - Last 12 months
Last Quarter 76%
72%



Time taken - last repair
Last Quarter 76%
71%



Repairs & Maintenance
Last Quarter 58%
61%



Communal area clean
and well maintained
Last Quarter 71%
56%



Positive contribution
to neighbourhood
Last Quarter 67%
60%



Handling of
anti-social behaviour
Last Quarter 68%
53%



Easy to deal with
Last Quarter 66%
66%



Listen and acts
Last Quarter 59%
53%



Kept informed
Last Quarter 75%
66%



Treated fairly and
with respect
Last Quarter 67%
77%



Complaints handling
Last Quarter 15%
17%

not have a working smoke alarm in your home



Did you know?

- Around half of all fires at home are caused by cooking accidents.
- Two fires every day are started by candles.
- Every six days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette.
- About three fires a day are started by heaters.
- Every year, faulty electrics (overloaded sockets, appliances & wiring) cause around 4,000 fires at home across the UK.



Stay safe by:

- Making sure cigarettes are put out properly.
- Unplugging e-cigarettes when fully charged and by always using the right charger.
- Never leaving items on charge when you are out.
- Not using candles (but if you do, keep them away from anything flammable like curtains, and never leave them unattended).
- Never overloading extension leads. Check the amps limit and make sure the plugs you're using don't overload the amps limit of the extension lead.
- Never connecting one extension to another one.
- Making sure you always follow any manufacturer instructions and check there is a British or European safety mark that indicates charges comply with safety standards.



- Checking and replacing any old cables, especially if they are hidden from view.

Please note that if there was a fire, personal items like furnishings, household appliances, carpets, and clothes are not covered by Council Buildings Insurance, so tenants need their own insurance to protect and replace these belongings if something bad like a fire happens.

Affordable home contents insurance



To help our residents, Homes First have teamed up with Aviva (the UK's largest insurer) to provide a home contents insurance scheme for tenants and leaseholders which offers exclusive rates and a range of optional extras, including cover for accidental damage. There's no excess to pay if you need to make a claim, and you can spread the cost of the insurance with a monthly Direct Debit from as little as £5 per month.

You can find out more about the scheme on the website: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk by using the keyword 'insurance' in the search box or look on comparison sites to find a best value deal. How much you pay will depend on how much your possessions are worth, the size of your home, its location, and the type of cover you choose.

Chicken & Vegetable bake

Sweet potato, carrot and red pepper are all high in vitamin A, which helps our immune system and eye health.

- Servings: 4
- Prep time: 15 mins
- Cooking time: 45 mins

Ingredients:

- 1 Each of the following: sweet potato, carrot, aubergine, courgette and red pepper.
- 1 Red onion.
- ½ tbsp Olive oil.
- 2 Cloves garlic, crushed.
- 1½ tbsp Wholegrain mustard.
- 1 tsp White wine vinegar.

- 1 tsp Soy sauce.
- 1 tbsp Honey.
- 400g Chicken mini fillets.
- 300g Brown rice, cooked

Method:

- Preheat oven to 180°C, gas mark 4.
- Dice all vegetables to approx. 2-3cm. Place on a large roasting tray and toss with the olive oil, season. Bake for 25 minutes.
- Whisk garlic, mustard, vinegar, soy and honey together and combine in a bowl with the chicken fillets.
- Add the chicken to the vegetables along with the excess juices.



- Return to oven for a further 20 minutes until the chicken is cooked through and vegetables are golden.
- Serve with the cooked rice.

This easy dish can be made with whatever seasonal vegetables you like or with what you have in your fridge. You can also swap the chicken for turkey, salmon, or plant-based alternatives such as butterbeans, chickpeas or tofu.

This recipe comes courtesy of yakult.info/gut-health-diet

Independent living with a sense of community

Both Eastbourne and Lewes District Council offer retirement housing accommodation for people aged over 60 years in unfurnished flats, studio apartments, or bungalows especially designed for older people. The accommodation is comfortable, convenient, safe, and enables residents to enjoy independent living with a sense of community.

All retirement homes have an intercom alarm system with emergency assistance available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and a Retirement Housing Advisor there to provide well-being checks and signpost residents to support services. Many of the retirement courts also have social activities that you can join which are organised by residents to build a strong sense of community and foster lasting friendships.

If you're interested in finding out more about our properties or would like to look at one of our show flats, please contact our friendly and professional team by emailing: RetirementHousing@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk, or by viewing our web page: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/RetirementHousing or call us on: **01273 085483**.



Win £50



We recently consulted some involved tenants about the magazine and there was a plea to bring the competitions back, so for this edition we're offering you the chance to win £50 of shopping vouchers with a crossword competition.

All you need to do is return the completed crossword with your full name, address and contact details by Friday 10 January 2025. The winner will be randomly selected from any correct entries returned by the deadline, and they'll receive £50 of shopping vouchers!

Completed crosswords can be sent to Tenant Involvement c/o 2a Horsfield Road, Lewes, BN7 2TA or sent electronically to: tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk.

If you need a printed copy of the puzzle to complete, simply text **07595 460334** or call and leave a message with your full name and address.

All the answers to the crossword can be found in this magazine!

Down:

1. Name something Tpas offers for free to tenants.
2. Where do most fires start in the home?
4. Where does Jacqui live?
5. What do you need to make sure are up to date when preparing for winter?
8. Which company offers affordable home contents insurance?
9. What month of the year was the Community Living Well booklet published?
12. What company do the Councils use to conduct their surveys?
14. What is a common slip hazard to be aware of?

Across:

3. How many Consumer Standards are there?
6. How many frauds in a thousand are prosecuted?
7. What type of mustard goes into a Chicken & Vegetable Bake?
10. What is the name of the chatbot on our website?
11. What is a key component of one of the new Consumer Standards?
13. Name a place where Legionnaire's Disease can sometimes be picked up.
15. What commonly gets trapped in radiators?
16. How many years has Reny lived in Peacehaven?

Legionnaires' Disease Prevention

Important advice for tenants



Legionnaires' disease is a lung infection which you can get from inhaling droplets of water containing the bacteria. Although uncommon it can be serious, and is usually caught in places like hotels, hospitals, or offices where the bacteria have found their way into the water supply. It's less common to catch it at home because in a domestic setting, the regular flow of the water is usually enough to flush out the system which reduces the risk of exposure.

Where are the Legionella bacteria found?

All hot and cold-water systems in residential properties are a potential source for legionella bacteria growth. The main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply, for example in spray from showers and taps, even in pipes. Legionella bacteria can grow in water that's between 20°C and 45°C that has stagnated, and where there is sludge, rust, and scale present for the bacteria to feed upon and multiply.

Who is at risk?

Legionnaire's disease most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest or lung problems, but not everyone exposed to legionella bacteria becomes ill. Legionnaire's disease is not contagious, and you cannot get it from drinking water. On average, there are approximately 500 reported cases of Legionnaire's disease a year, but it's easily preventable by putting in place some simple control measures.

What precautions can I take?

- From a safe distance, flush through showers and taps for 5 minutes following a period of non-use (i.e. when you move in, after you have been on holiday or if a room is not in regular use).
- Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from a build-up of lime scale, mould, or algae growth (regular cleaning every 3 months will help sterilise and kill any bacteria).
- Keep hot water on your boiler system at a temperature of 50°C or greater.
- Report any deposits such as rust or any unusual matter flowing from your water outlets to the Repairs Desk.

The Councils undertake regular assessments of properties to identify any potential problems. Further advice and information about Legionella and Legionnaires' disease can be found on the Health & Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires or you can call our repairs team on: 01274 471600 (Lewes) or 01323 410000 (Eastbourne) if you have any concerns or questions.

'Claims Farmer' Scam Warning

Claims Farmers are companies who operate by cold calling, distributing leaflets and using social media to encourage tenants to pursue claims for disrepair. These companies will often sound legitimate, but they usually refuse to provide a genuine company name, and any call back number provided will be a false number.

Tenants' personal details are then often sold to no win-no fee solicitors. It's worth thinking about who might benefit from having your personal details before disclosing anything to any callers. In some cases, tenants find themselves with legal costs to pay even if they later withdraw a claim. In other cases, the financial reward is often less than a tenant might have been offered with a genuine claim through the Housing Ombudsman Service.

We urge tenants to be wary of any cold calls they receive and to seek advice from council officers or a genuine solicitor before signing any documents. Tenants are also reminded that, as part of their Tenancy Agreement, they should let us know quickly if any repairs are needed in their home.


If you are unhappy with any housing or repairs service you have received, there are a number of options available to you, both informal and formal. To find out more, search for 'make a complaint' on our website: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

An update *idverde* on the grounds maintenance

The contract with our grounds maintenance contractor Idverde ends in March 2026 and the Councils are currently reviewing the options available for grounds maintenance work after that date.

In the interim, extra resources have been made available and we have employed a new officer to manage the contract and work with the contractors. As a result of this action, efficiency has improved, and some grounds maintenance work has been subcontracted out.

Default notices have been issued this year to Idverde, and if it's deemed necessary, more will follow in the final year of the contract.



Updating your information ...

Having up-to-date information helps us shape the services we deliver in the future.

Between January and April next year we'll be conducting a postal survey to update the information we hold about you and your household. Tenants in retirement homes, tenants in temporary accommodation and leaseholders will not be included in this exercise. Keeping this information up to date is a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing and the new consumer standards.

What information will we be collecting?

- Information about who currently lives in your home.
- Your contact details and contact preferences.
- Whether you have access to the internet.
- How well you are able to communicate in English.
- Your willingness to take part in future satisfaction surveys.

Why are we collecting this information?

It will help us to contact you more easily about any repairs, safety checks, rent or tenancy matters, and not bother you with surveys if you have chosen to opt out.

Some of the questions in the survey ask about

- Any health conditions you have and their day-to-day impact.
- The health and support needs of your household, such as visual or hearing impairments, or neuro-diversity issues.
- Wheelchair users and the support household members might need to be evacuated in an emergency.

This information will help us deliver services better by changing repair

priorities or updating our allocation criteria to meet the needs of particular groups of tenants for example. It will also help us improve our service by communicating differently, or by offering additional safety checks to those with high support needs.

The remaining questions ask for new information about the impact of any health conditions, about your wellbeing and life satisfaction, employment and finances.

This information will help us plan the delivery of services better. This could be something as simple as targeted information campaigns or more tailored services for tenants experiencing financial difficulties.

Do I have to answer all the questions?

The short answer is no.

We all feel differently about sharing information, and some questions will have a 'prefer not to answer' option so if you feel uncomfortable simply tick this.

Will the information be kept safe and secure?

We are working with Acuity who are a research provider with comprehensive policies in place that fully comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 UK and General Data Protection Regulation or "GDPR". More information about how data will be managed can be seen on our website by searching for 'privacy notice.'

If you don't want to take part in this surveys, please let us know by emailing your request to:

tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk or simply call us on **01273 471600** (Lewes) or **01323 410000** (Eastbourne).

Join tpas for free!



Tenant Involvement has a paid membership of Tpas (the tenant engagement experts) and this allows us to add tenant members for free. Being a Tpas tenant member gives you free ongoing support and guidance to help you to be more involved or to lead an activity in your community.

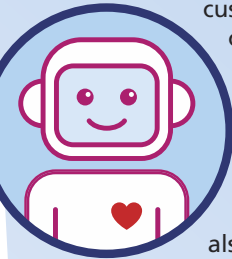
There are many advantages to being a member which include:

- Invites to virtual and in person roundtables, focus groups and workshops.
- Live free webinars and access to pre-recorded member webinars.
- Opportunities to influence national policy.
- A newsletter that keeps you up to date with tenant engagement news.
- Access to a tenant only online networking group to create engagement conversations across England.
- Opportunities to share your experiences and opinions.
- A chance to gain recognition and share what you're doing.

If you'd like to join Tpas, simply email tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk with your name and address and we'll do the rest.



What we do and how to get in touch



CUSTOMER FIRST
Customer First are the main point of contact for customers on the telephone, online chat, or via ELLIS the Chatbot. The team deals with all casework across the Councils except housing related work which is managed by Homes First. The team are also responsible for income recovery including Council rents, Housing Benefit and Council Tax.

ENVIRONMENT FIRST
Environment First manage all the waste and recycling services across the Councils. If issues arise with bin collections, street cleansing or anything else waste related this team can help.

HOMES FIRST
The Green Consultancy Team look after communal gardens and green areas such as recreation grounds and play parks. They are responsible for grass cutting, shrub maintenance and tree safety, and employ contractors like Idverde to maintain these areas to prescribed standards.

HOMES FIRST
Homes First delivers housing services to Council tenants and leaseholders. This includes the allocation of homes, tenancy management, the repairs service and managing homelessness on behalf of the Councils.

NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST
Neighbourhood First are a team of officers who work to improve neighbourhoods. They act as the link between the Councils and the community, and work with volunteers, groups, and other Council staff to maintain the quality of the environment.

Neighbourhood First advisors can help with a range of issues including dog fouling, fly-tipping, littering and street cleaning, abandoned vehicles, and fallen trees.

Neighbourhood First also carry out street and open spaces inspections as well as inspections of the communal areas in blocks of flats.



There are many ways you can report issues...

One way is to report online at: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk. You simply need to type 'report a problem' in the enter search text field and press return to see many options. The online forms are a quick and easy way to report many things:

- Repairs to your home and, for blocks of flats, repairs to communal areas
- Missed bins and waste and recycling issues.
- Dog and animal problems
- Litter and fly tipping.
- Graffiti and vandalism.
- Noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

If you prefer, you can type in a key word. For example, for maintenance issues, type in the word 'repair' and press return.

Chat with ELLIS and online chat are available on the website during office hours. Look for the icon on the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. If ELLIS is unable to answer your query, customer advisors are on-hand to help.

If you prefer to call us, you can use **01273 471600** (Lewes tenants) or **01323 410000** (Eastbourne tenants).

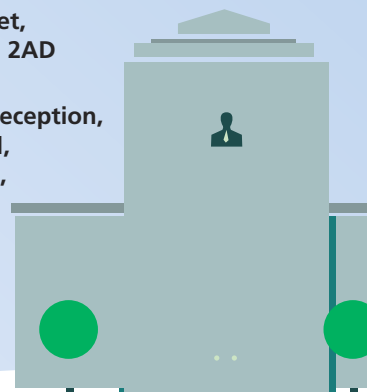
The Report it (Love Clean Streets) app is also available to download by clicking the 'Report It' smartphone app button.



We can take in documents and letters at our offices, signpost you to other organisations and charities, and also offer basic advice. If we can't help with a query, and you don't have a phone or device available to go online with or to contact us yourself, you can use the telephones inside the areas.

The reception spaces are very small and not in a private setting, so please consider this if you are bringing others with you or want to discuss sensitive matters of any kind. As you can see on this page there are many other easy ways to contact us, but if you want to come to an office, these are currently open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday at:

- **6 High Street, Lewes, BN7 2AD**
- **Eastbourne Town Hall reception, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG**



Thinking of starting your own business?

• In Eastbourne...

Edeal provides free business support to start-ups and businesses including one-to-one mentoring, social media training and business start-up workshops. To find out more take a look at: www.edealgroup.org.

• In the Lewes District area...

There's a three-part programme to help anyone with a business idea and any business, including community enterprises, co-operatives and other social enterprises, that have been trading for less than 24 months. To find out more take a look at: www.ldstartup.co.uk.



Find us on Facebook and X for news and information about all our services and housing-related news.

Tenants Open Voice is compiled and edited by Harry Hillery (Tenant Involvement) and is designed in-house by Printing Services for Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils.



Find us on Facebook:
Lewes District Housing
Eastbourne Borough Council



Follow us on X:
@LewesDC
@EastbourneBC