



TENANT HANDBOOK

Make the Most of Your Tenancy



1. Introduction

This handbook has been produced to provide useful and relevant information to help make the most of your new tenancy. We hope it helps you to settle into your new home, and answers some of the questions you may have.

This handbook also outlines your tenancy conditions, information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our rights and responsibilities as your landlord.

We hope you enjoy reading this handbook and use it as your guide to the services we offer. Please save it in a safe place so that you can refer back to it whenever you need to.

This handbook provides further advice on your tenancy agreement but is not a legal document. It gives guidance on how you can make sure you do not break any of the conditions of your tenancy.

We update both the handbook and tenancy agreement from time to time; if there is any difference between the two documents you should follow the information in the tenancy agreement as this will always take priority.

Providing you with a good service

We have a straightforward approach to customer care, service and support. We treat our customers as we would like to be treated ourselves. We are proud that our customers come first and always try to make sure that our customers are treated fairly and sensitively.

We will go that extra mile to ensure that your issues are addressed. One of our main aims is to provide you with an excellent service. We regularly review all our services to ensure that they are efficient, effective and provide good value for money.

We aim to provide a high standard of service whenever you contact us and make sure that everyone is treated in a courteous, polite, efficient and consistent manner.

1. Introduction



Equal opportunities

We are committed to fairness and equality to all, operating with professionalism, integrity and openness. We believe that everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness - regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We aim to make all our services accessible, welcoming and appropriate to meet the needs of all our customers in the communities we manage, and treat all our customers fairly and sensitively. In order to meet this aim we are trying our best to do the following:

- Produce information specific to the needs of different groups of customers e.g. young people, elderly people, people fleeing from domestic abuse, people with disabilities etc
- Provide information on our services in alternative formats when you ask us to, such as Braille, large print or audio
- Make sure our offices provide access for all
- Offer to visit you at home if you have circumstances that prevent you from coming to one of our offices
- Provide translation for customers through Language Line
- Ensure our website is accessible.

Harassment and abuse

We will not tolerate:

Harassment or abuse of any kind, including hate crime based on age, gender, race, disability, sexuality or religion. This includes verbal and physical abuse directed at tenants, residents, staff and our contractors. We will investigate any such incidents in full. We will take suitable action against people who carry them out and support those affected by them.

You can help us by telling us

- About any incidents of harassment or abuse
- If you have any enhanced needs, such as communication or mobility difficulties
- Or if we are not providing you with services which meet your needs.

In order to meet the diverse needs of our customers, we need to know more about you. We ask you, and everyone in your home, to complete a customer profile form. We use this information to help us tailor services to your individual needs and make sure that we are delivering services to everyone in a fair and equal way. This information will only be seen by us. If it will improve our service to you, our contractors may also be given relevant information, but we will not share it with anyone else. The information will be protected by the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.



1. Introduction

Data protection

We are committed to comply with Data Protection legislation. Keeping your personal information accurate and secure is a vital part of providing efficient services to you. We always comply with the relevant legislation when handling your personal information. We will only use the information we hold about you for the purpose you provided it and will also only collect the minimum information necessary to fulfil that purpose.

When you provide information you will be told what it will be used for and whom it will be shared with. However, you need to be aware that we are required to share your information, on occasion, between different sections of the Council and with other agencies to help reduce crime or investigate fraud.

You have the right to access any personal data that is being kept about you either on a computer or in structured and accessible manual files. Any person may exercise this right by submitting a fee and a request in writing to:

**Data Protection Officer
Information Governance
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
Kings Street
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 6JQ**

The Freedom of Information Act

This act gives everybody the right to information held by a public authority. You are entitled to any information that is not personal information, or that is not exempt under the Act. You can access information that we hold by:

Checking the Council's Publication Scheme which is a list of the information held by Maidstone Borough Council and gives details on how to obtain the information.

The publication scheme can be found at <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/information-and-data/tier-3-primary-areas/data-protection/data-protection-and-foi-primary-areas/publication-scheme>

Or, you can read our [guidance for submitting a Freedom of Information Request](#), published on our website.

A great deal of the information that we hold is personal and private to individuals. However, the Freedom of Information Act will not make public, private or confidential information.

2. Moving In

Get yourself connected

Now that you have signed up for your new home you will need to register with gas, electricity and water suppliers as a new tenant and make arrangements for connection and payment of bills. It is important to do this as soon as possible, to prevent any disputes about previous tenant bills and how much fuel you have used.

Your Gas and Electric supplier will be discussed with you at the sign up of tenancy.

When you have found out who your suppliers are, contact them direct - it is important before you call to have your meter readings to hand, along with your new address and post code. You will be able to close any accounts at your previous home in the same call.

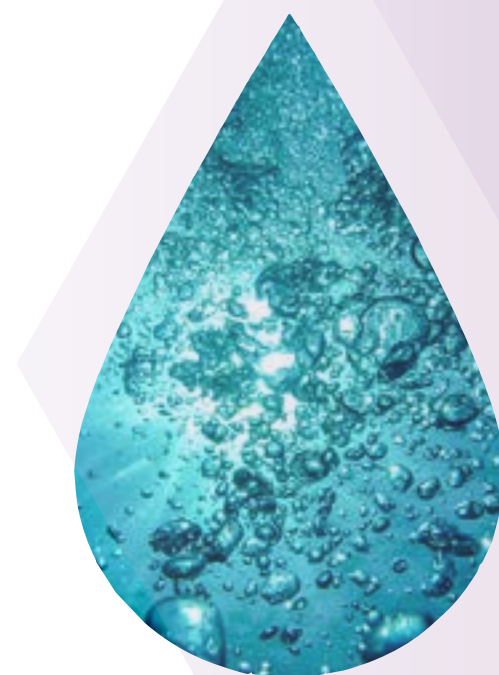
If you want to change supplier

You don't have to remain with your current utility supplier - you can choose whichever company you prefer to supply your fuel. If you want to change supplier, you must arrange this as it is your responsibility. To change suppliers can take up to four weeks so you should act as soon as possible if you want to change.

Water

The water supply to your home should already be connected when you move in. If you turn on the cold tap and nothing comes out, the water has probably been turned off at the stop tap for safety reasons. To turn your water on, you need to find the stop tap, which is normally under the sink in the kitchen cupboard. Sometimes the stop tap is in the bathroom, in a kitchen cupboard or in the hot water cylinder cupboard

If you are having trouble finding the stop tap, please call Southeast water engineering work at 0333 000 0002.



2. Moving In



Water meters

Did you know that when you have a water meter fitted, it cannot be changed back? If you are having a water meter installed, please tell us first. A water meter may have advantages for some tenants but may disadvantage whoever moves in after you.

Heating

Gas fires, gas heating and pipe work to gas cookers. We are responsible for ensuring your safety, and so your gas meter will have been capped off to prevent its use until we have carried out all the necessary safety checks.

These can't be done when the property is empty, so as soon as you have the keys and have contacted the gas supply company, please contact Clairglow at 01892 531 421 or email servicing@clairglow.co.uk

The gas engineer will call and check your installation including the pipes for the gas supply. The engineer will check your heating and show you how to use the heating system. This appointment needs to be pre-booked, as emergency engineers at the weekend will not be able to carry out this check.

Electric storage heaters

You will not be able to operate your storage heaters until you have your electric supply turned on. Your home may have night storage radiators whilst your neighbours have gas fired central heating - this may be due to a choice of the previous tenant, or lack of gas supply.

Telephone

If you would like to have a telephone at home you should contact the telephone company that you would like to use, they will be able to advise you on the services they provide. If you had a telephone at your previous address you may also be able to take your old number with you, and if there is a telephone line at your new home you may only need to pay one re-connection fee.

Redirecting your mail

Royal Mail will re-direct your mail from your old address to your new home for a small charge, to arrange this you will need to fill out an application form at the post office.

2. Moving In

Changing your address

Even if you get Royal Mail to re-direct your mail, you must remember to give your address to the following people:

- Employers
- Doctor/Dentist
- Bank and Building Society
- Credit Card Companies
- DVLA if you have a car, driving licence or pay road tax
- Benefits Agency/Job Centre (if you receive benefits)
- Insurance Companies
- Children's Schools



Wheelie bins

There should be a wheelie bin at your new home, if it is missing or damaged, you should visit <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/bins-and-recycling>.

If your bin becomes lost or damaged, you will need to go onto the same website and order a new one.



3. Types of Tenancies



Introductory Tenancy

An Introductory Tenancy is a trial period designed to enable you to show us that you can manage a longer-term Secure Tenancy. The Introductory Tenancy is for 12 months unless we opt to extend it by 6 months. At the end of 12 months (or any extension) you will normally become a Secure Tenant unless we have taken steps to end the Tenancy. While you are an Introductory Tenant, we can evict you more easily than a Secure Tenant. We do not have to prove a ground for possession although we will always give reasons why we are ending the Tenancy. Usually, this will be because you have breached the conditions of your tenancy.

Secure Tenancy

A Secure Tenancy means that you have the right to live in your home as long as you keep to the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement.

What is a tenancy agreement?

A tenancy agreement is a legal document that all new tenants must sign at the start of their tenancy. It is a legal contract, which sets out the rights and responsibilities of both you as a tenant and us, Maidstone Borough Council, as your landlord. By signing the tenancy agreement, you have agreed to keep to the conditions of your tenancy. The tenancy agreement is an extremely important document, and you should read it carefully. This handbook provides further advice on your tenancy agreement but is not a legal document. It gives guidance on how you can make sure you do not break any of the conditions of your tenancy. We update both the handbook and tenancy agreement from time to time; if there is any difference between the two documents you should follow the information within the tenancy agreement as this will always take priority.

3. Types of Tenancies



What happens if I break my tenancy agreement?

If you break any of the conditions of your tenancy agreement, we can take action to end your tenancy. We will usually try to sort out any problems with you first. However, if the problem is serious and we cannot solve it together, we may have to take steps to evict you from your home.

Step 1

If we receive an allegation that you have broken one or more of your Tenancy Conditions, a Housing Officer will contact you. Unless the allegation is very serious, you will usually be given the opportunity to put things right. If the problem stops at this point in the process, no further action will be taken against you.

Step 2

If you continue to break the tenancy conditions, we will consider taking further action against you. We will tell you about any action we intend to take and what you should do to avoid it.

Step 3

If the problems continue after we have given you reasonable warnings, we will apply to the court for an order to allow us to evict you and repossess your home. The court's decision will be based on the evidence presented and the seriousness of the problem. We will have to prove to the judge that you have broken the tenancy conditions and that evicting you is reasonable action to take.

Remember:

You are likely to lose your home if you continually break your tenancy conditions. If you are evicted, you will not be able to join our housing register (waiting list for housing) again, and it is unlikely that you will be re-housed because of your homelessness.

3. Types of Tenancies

What are the tenancy conditions?

The tenancy conditions are set out in your tenancy agreement. The following are just a few examples of behaviour that would break the tenancy conditions:

- Falling behind with your rent
- Behaving in an antisocial way
- Playing very loud music
- Failing to keep your garden in a neat and tidy condition
- Failing to keep your pets under control
- Using abusive, threatening or violent behaviour towards your neighbours or our staff
- Selling illegal drugs at your home

Your rights as a secure tenant

You have the right to live in your home for the rest of your life, as long as you keep to the tenancy conditions.

The right to succession

There can only ever be one succession to a council tenancy. If you have a joint tenancy and the other person dies then you will automatically take over the tenancy.

If the original tenancy was a joint tenancy and one of the original tenants has died, the surviving tenant will have already have taken over the tenancy by succession. When that person dies, no-one will be able to succeed the tenancy.

If the person who died was a sole tenant, you can succeed the tenancy if you are their husband, wife, civil partner or someone living with them as their partner, as long as you were living in the home at the time of their death.

If you succeed a tenancy, you will have the same tenancy as the person who has died.

If you succeed the tenancy, you will be responsible for any existing rent arrears or other breach of tenancy. Only one person can succeed to a tenancy, so for example if you succeed your mother's tenancy your husband, wife, civil partner or someone living with you as your partner cannot become a joint tenant with you and they cannot succeed the tenancy if you die.

If you succeed a tenancy which is too big for your needs, we may ask you to consider moving to a smaller home. In these cases we will help you to find a new home.



3. Types of Tenancies



Right to take in lodgers

Only secure tenants can take in lodgers without our permission. However, you should remember the following important points.

- You must not let your home become overcrowded
- If you are getting Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit you must tell the Revenues and Benefits Team as taking in a lodger could affect the amount of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit you receive.

If you currently live alone, you must tell the Council Tax that you are taking in a lodger. You will lose your entitlement to the 25% single person's discount on your council tax bill. Contact: 01622 602 376.
Affordablehousing@maidstone.gov.uk

The right to sublet part of your home

Subletting is not the same as taking in a lodger.

- A lodger usually shares your home and

- may have meals with you. He or she may pay for food, bills and upkeep
- A subtenant has the use of part of your home, and you need their permission to go into those parts. A subtenant does not have any meals provided and he or she would normally do their own cooking and cleaning. You may be able to sublet part of your home, but you should remember the following points
- You need our permission first. Failure to do so is not only a breach of your tenancy but can also be a criminal offence
- You cannot sublet your whole home. If you do, we will end your secure tenancy
- If you are getting Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit to help with your rent, you must let the Revenues and Benefits team/DWP know.

The right to buy your home

Only secure tenants will be able to buy your home if you qualify to do so. We will provide you with more information about the Right to Buy on request.



3. Types of Tenancies



The right to make improvements

Only secure tenants have the right to improve your home (for example, to fit a new kitchen or bathroom, to paint the outside of the property and so on).

Alterations you cannot make

- We will not give permission to make alterations that make your property unsafe. This would include structural changes that do not meet building regulations, changes that can affect fire safety (for example cat flaps in fire doors or dividing bedrooms into multiple rooms).
- We will not give you permission to make alterations that will make it harder for us to manage and maintain the property. This would include installing solid fuel appliances, conservatories and laminate flooring to first floors or higher or to install systems which control your heating or other fixtures remotely.

You must get permission first

- You must complete an online tenant alteration form and wait for our permission before proceeding
- You must comply with current Building Regulations and obtain building control and planning consent if necessary and copies of the approval must be provided to us
- Suitable scaled drawings with specifications must be provided to us if required
- The Party Wall Act 1996 must be complied with
- You must make sure that work does not

cause annoyance or nuisance to others and ensure that work is carried out in a competent manner, using industry standard materials. The work must be carried out by a qualified, competent trades person.

- if any of these works involve drilling into or removing walls you, or your contractor, need to make sure the appropriate surveys for example electrical or asbestos surveys - are completed before any work takes place. Our agreement for you to complete works will only be given if we have seen proof of these surveys. Asbestos surveys must be completed by a UKATA qualified contractor. More information on asbestos can be found on page 32.

The right to compensation relating to repairs

By law, we must carry out certain repairs that might affect your health, safety or security within a set number of days. If our contractor fails to complete any of these repairs (known as qualifying repairs) on time, you can instruct us to appoint another alternative contractor to carry out the work. If the second contractor also fails to do the work on time, you may be entitled to compensation. If you think this applies to you, please contact: Affordablehousing@maidstone.gov.uk or call 01622602372

The right to exchange

Only secure tenants have the right to exchange your home for another Council or Housing Association home. You must get permission before any exchange takes place.

3. Types of Tenancies

The right to be consulted

We must consult you about important changes such as large-scale building work, how your home is managed, or changing how we collect rent.

The right to assign

In certain circumstances, you have the right to assign (legally transfer) your tenancy to someone else. We can only allow you to transfer your tenancy if:

- We have agreed to you exchanging your home with that of another Council or Housing Association tenant, or
- There is a court order to do so, in connection with divorce or child care proceedings.

In some cases, if you want to leave your home, we may let you assign your tenancy to another member of your family. We would only allow you to pass your tenancy on to someone who could take it over by succession after your death (see page 9). You must get our permission in writing before you transfer your tenancy to another person.

Your responsibilities as a tenant

You must:

- Keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement
- Pay your rent in full and on time
- Be a good neighbour
- Respect other people's right to live in peace and quiet.

Joint tenants

If you are a joint tenant, each of you is equally responsible for keeping to all conditions of the tenancy agreement. Here are a few important points to remember about joint tenancies.

- Both tenants are equally responsible for paying the rent and for
- any overdue rent (rent arrears)
- Either joint tenant can apply for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit
- If one joint tenant dies, the tenancy agreement is automatically succeeded by the other joint tenant
- If your relationship breaks down, it is not possible for one joint tenant to make the other leave the home. You should discuss the situation with us or get legal advice
- If one joint tenant leaves and wants to give up their share of the joint tenancy, they should contact us.

Creating a joint tenancy

If you are the only tenant and you want someone to join your tenancy so that they have the same rights as you, we will consider your request as long as:

- You are not breaking any of the tenancy conditions
- The proposed joint tenant would normally have been a joint tenant if they had been housed with you when you got the tenancy
- The proposed joint tenant has lived with you in the home for at least 12 months.

3. Types of Tenancies



Our rights as the landlord

We have the right to:

- Change the tenancy agreement, the rent or other charges as long as we give you suitable notice beforehand
- Enter the property, without giving you notice, in an emergency or if there is a risk to any person or property
- Take legal action against you if you break any of the conditions of your tenancy agreement.

Our responsibilities as the landlord

We must:

- Keep the structure of your home in a good state of repair
- Carry out repairs that we are responsible for
- Allow you to live in your home in peace and quiet, as long as you keep to the conditions of your tenancy agreement
- Give you at least 24 hours' notice if we want to inspect your home, carry out repairs or make improvements.

4. Your rent and other charges



Under your tenancy agreement your rent must be paid regularly and on time. Your rent is due weekly in advance on a Monday, except for those weeks that have been designated as 'no collection' weeks. If you fail to pay your rent regularly you are at risk of losing your home.

How much rent should you pay?

The letter that we sent to you when we offered you your home will tell you how much your rent is. You will receive a letter every year advising you how much your current rent is. Please note that you may be entitled to help towards paying your rent, there is more information about this further on in this section.

How are rents worked out?

The Government now sets the level of rent for all social housing. Some tenants will have heating and other charges added if these are provided communally, or there are service charges.

If this is the case we will explain what these charges are when we tell you how much your rent is.

4. Your rent and other charges

What does the rent pay for?

Your rent is used to manage and maintain your home. It is kept completely separate from other services provided by the council, which are paid for through the council tax.

Will you get notice of your rent increasing?

We will write to you and tell you about any increases in your rent and/or charges at least 4 weeks before they are introduced. Any change to your Housing Benefit because of a rent increase will be worked out automatically. You will need to tell Universal Credit of any rent changes via your journal as soon as they happen.



How can you pay your rent and Service Charge?

It is up to you to decide which method suits you best. You can choose from:

Direct Debit

By Direct Debit- This is set up by you with your bank, you will require our bank details. You should include your rent reference as the payment reference. Payments for direct debit will be debited on the 1st or the 15th of the month.

Standing Order

You can also arrange to have your rent paid by standing order from your bank or building society account. You will require our bank details (below) and should include your rent account reference. Standing orders can be set up as weekly or monthly payments on the date that you set.

Our Bank Details are as follows:

Lloyds Bank PLC
Maidstone Borough Council
Sort Code – 30-00-02
Account Number – 00574428

By Telephone:

You call us on 01622 602888 to speak to our payments line. You will need your debit/ credit card and rent account reference to hand.

Online:

you can also pay MBC through the Maidstone Borough council Website portal.

4. Your rent and other charges



Rent Arrears

What happens if you don't pay your rent?


It is important that you do not fall into arrears with your rent payments. If for any reason you miss a payment, you must bring your rent account up-to-date as soon as possible.

If you have any difficulty paying your rent, please contact us immediately so that we can give you advice about benefits which you could be entitled to claim. We can also put you in touch with other agencies that may be able to help if you have problems with your paying your rent.

We can also help you to make an arrangement whereby you can pay off your rent arrears by an agreed amount each week. If you keep to this agreement, no further action will be taken against you.

If you do not get in touch with us to arrange to clear your arrears or fail to keep to a payment arrangement without explanation, we will take legal action against you. The cost of taking you to court will then be added to the amount that you already owe us. If your arrears continue to increase, you may be evicted from your home.

We are here to help

You can contact us by telephone, email or through the Council's website to discuss your rent. You can arrange a private appointment with us to discuss any problems that 

are having in keeping up with your rent payments. We will also visit you at home at a time convenient to you to discuss ways that will help you to keep your rent account up-to-date. We can offer help in completing online benefit forms and arrange expert advice on dealing with debt or claiming other benefits.

Rent Credit

We encourage tenants to build a credit on their rental account equal to a months rent by paying a small regular weekly amount. This helps prevent arrears building, for example if financial circumstances change and you need to claim new benefits or you lose your job. It also means that when you move out, your last months rent is already paid, freeing your money up for other expenses.

For all new tenants we ask for a minimum of one week's rent in advance to be paid at the point of sign up, this includes service charges where applicable. We then ask for a small weekly amount to be paid until the rent account is in credit by one month.

Refunds for rental-credit will only usually be issued to tenants' who are more than four weeks in credit and where there are no other debts on any sub accounts including court costs and former tenant arrears to the Council.

4. Your rent and other charges

If payments are not kept up-to-date a summary of the action we will take to tackle rent arrears is shown below:

Step 1 - Reminder

We will send you a first reminder letter if your account goes into arrears.

Step 2 - Second Reminder

If you do not contact us after the first reminder letter or you fail to reduce your arrears, we will send you a second reminder.

Step 3 - Notice of Seeking Possession

If your arrears keep increasing, we will serve you with a Notice of Seeking Possession. This explains that, unless your arrears are cleared or reduced within the next four weeks, we may take legal action against you.

Step 4 - Pre-court letter

If you have not cleared your arrears or kept to a payment arrangement during the 4 weeks mentioned at step 3, we will send you a pre-court letter. This letter warns you that court action will be taken if the situation continues.

Step 5 - Court Action

Your case may be taken to court if your arrears continue to rise. We will tell you the date of the court hearing and advise that you attend. We will ask the court for a Possession Order but request that this be suspended if you pay an agreed amount in addition to your weekly rent. In exceptional circumstances we will apply for an immediate possession order.

Step 6 - Possession Order

If you keep to the payments set out in the court order, no further action will be taken. If you fail to keep to the terms of your court order we will ask for permission to evict you from your home.

Step 7 - Warrant

We will apply to the court for a warrant to regain possession of your home.

Step 8 - Eviction

You will be issued with an eviction date. If the required payment is made before the eviction date, the eviction warrant will be withdrawn. If the required payment is not made, the eviction will be carried out and you will lose your home.

Please Note

It is our policy to use eviction only as a last resort, we aim to give you all the help and advice which we can so that you do not lose your home. If you are evicted for rent arrears you may be seen to have made yourself intentionally homeless. This will



4. Your rent and other charges



Help towards paying your rent

If you are on a low income you may be able to get help with your rent by making a claim for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (Housing Costs).

How do you claim Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit?

You will need to complete a Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit claim giving details of your income, savings and other people who live in your home.

For Housing Benefit apply online by visiting <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/benefits/primary-areas/housing-benefits> and clicking 'Apply'.

If you have any problems with or queries, please contact: 01622602376.

You can apply online for Universal Credit by visiting www.gov.uk/universal-credit

You will need to make a claim for Council Tax Reduction in addition to a claim for Universal Credit by visiting <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/benefits/primary-areas/council-tax-support>

What documents do you need to provide?

When making a claim, you will need to provide original proof (not photocopies) of your national insurance number and income

and savings. The online form explains what proof you will need to provide and what kind of documents are acceptable.

It will speed up your claim if you supply all the required information. If you do not provide the correct information, it will delay the processing of your claim and may lead to arrears building up on your rent account. If you do not provide the necessary information within a set time frame from the date of your Housing Benefit/Universal Credit claim, your claim may be cancelled.

It is important that you put in your claim for Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit as soon as possible. Housing Benefit is usually paid from the Monday after the day when your claim is received. Claims for Housing Benefit are not usually backdated to an earlier date unless there is a very good reason that you didn't apply earlier.

Universal Credit is usually paid from the date of your online claim. However, Universal Credit is always paid in arrears which means you could be waiting up to five weeks for your first payment.

If you are awarded Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit you must let the Council/ DWP know if your circumstances change (e.g. your income or your household details change) because your claim may be affected. If you are paid too much benefit because you didn't tell us/DWP about a change in circumstances, you will be asked to pay it back.

4. Your rent and other charges

Recharges

If we have to complete a repair that is your responsibility, we will bill you for the cost of it. If you cannot afford to pay the whole bill we will work with you to agree an affordable payment plan

When you leave your home it must be clean and cleared of all possessions. You are also responsible for putting right any damage caused. If you fail to do this we will recharge you for any work we have to do that you should have completed.

Service charges

A service charge is a payment for the costs of managing, maintaining, repairing and providing specific services in addition to the basic rent you pay for living in your home. Examples of services are:

- Cleaning of communal rooms, hallways, corridors and staircases
- Window cleaning in communal areas
- Door entry systems
- Fire alarm/emergency lighting
- Fire safety equipment
- Landscaping/grounds maintenance
- Laundry equipment
- Lifts
- Electricity, water and gas in communal areas
- Scheme Manager
- Alarm system

A service charge can also be payable in respect of specific items installed within your home which are over and above the normal bricks and mortar and fixtures and fittings you would expect to find in a home which are covered by your rent. Examples of these are:

- Stair lift
- Track and hoist
- Through floor lift
- Clos-o-mat toilets



5. Repairs and Maintenance

As your landlord, we are committed to providing you with an excellent repairs and maintenance service. You share responsibility with Maidstone Borough Council for looking after your home. We are responsible for certain repairs and maintenance, but you are responsible for decorating the inside of your home and for some small repairs.

Repairs we are responsible for:

- Keeping the structure and outside of your home safe
- Keeping the essential services to the property safe and in working order
- Keeping communal amenities safe
- Taking care to prevent or repair faults, to keep people reasonably safe and protect property from damage, and
- Make good plasterwork after carrying out any repair

We will not pay for repairs that are necessary if you, or anyone living with or visiting you, have neglected or not taken care of your

home. If the problem that needs repairing poses a risk to you or your home, we will carry out the repair, but you will have to pay for this work.

If we need to complete a repair that is your responsibility then you will need to pay for or agree a payment plan with us before the work can be completed.

We want to maintain your home as best we can and rely on you to help us by reporting repairs promptly and allowing us reasonable access to carry out work. We may also take legal action against you if you fail to let us in when it is reasonable to do so.






5. Repairs and Maintenance

Repairs you are responsible for:

- Decorating the inside of your home and floor coverings, except where MBC have installed safety flooring and safety fencing
- Replacing keys
- Repairing any equipment, fixtures or fittings you provided or fitted yourself (unless we have agreed to take responsibility for them)
- Unblock plug holes on baths, sinks and wash hand basins
- Repairing any damage caused by you or anyone living with or visiting you
- Replacing fuses and plugs
- Maintaining your garden, including lawns, plants, bushes and trees
- Replacing television aerials and satellite dishes (other than ones we have provided), and
- Replacing toilet seats and plugs and chains on baths, sinks and wash hand basins
- Any damage caused by someone gaining access to your home with a warrant
- Replacing light bulbs.

Also, if we are coming to you to carry out repairs, you are responsible for clearing the area of work, which includes removing furniture, carpets and personal belongings, before we arrive. If you are elderly or have a disability and would have difficulty doing this, please tell us this when you report a repair.

How to report a repair



The Council will normally give at least 24 hours' notice but more immediate access may be required in an emergency, for example, fire, flooding, gas leak, infestation or due to any safeguarding issue. (These examples are not exhaustive.) We reserve the right to recover from you the costs of any abortive appointment for access.

You can report a repair in the following ways:

Non Emergences only: call 01622 602 376 or email Affordablehousing@maidstone.gov.uk

During the first year only, all emergencies occurring outside of office hours should be reported to Emerson Response on 0800 881288.

After the first year, emergency cover will be provided by DMS or Clairglow: For Emergency Repair please call DMS. 01303 242001 or email oohs@dmspm.co.uk. For Gas boiler please contact Clairglow 01892 531 421 or email servicing@clairglow.co.uk.

5. Repairs and Maintenance

When you report a repair

When you report a repair it is important that you give us as much information as possible to help us arrange the right work as quickly as possible. When reporting a repair, please tell us the following.

- Your full name, address and up to date phone number
- A detailed description of the problem and where it is
- Whether the fault has been reported before
- When we can get into your home (any morning, specific mornings, afternoon only and so on)
- Any other important information (for example, a crime reference number if the repair is needed after a break in to your home that you have reported to the police).

Where the repair is inside your home, there must be someone over the age of 18 present at all times during the repair.

Under data protection laws, we will keep any information we have about you confidential. We will not give your phone number or any other information to anybody outside Maidstone Borough Council without getting your permission first.

Out of Hours Repairs Service

We provide an out of hours repairs service for emergency repairs that cannot wait until the next working day. Some emergency repairs carried out outside of normal working hours may be temporary ones carried out to make the property safe. We would then carry out a permanent repair at a later date. Our staff and contractors try to come out to emergency repairs on the day they are reported. Please

don't report a repair that is not an emergency at night or at weekends.

These calls will delay us going out to genuine emergencies. If you call us out and your repair is not an emergency, we may not carry out the work, and we may charge you for the call-out. If your emergency is life-threatening, call the emergency services on 999.



5. Repairs and Maintenance



How soon will the repair be carried out?

We will carry out repairs as quickly as possible. Repairs are prioritised according to the type of work that is needed.

The priorities are as follows.

Priority 1

Emergency repairs (carried out within 24 hours) These are repairs of any faults that could kill, injure or damage the health and safety of any person, or cause serious damage to property. Examples of such faults include:

- Collapsed floors or ceilings
- Having no heating or hot water during the winter
- Leaks or bursts causing damage to the property
- Having no electricity at all in your home
- Problems that could cause a fire
- Making doors secure after someone has used force to enter your home
- Renewing locks to make the property secure
- Serious water leaks in the roof
- Sewage overflowing in the home from blocked drains or damaged toilets (we may charge you for the repair if the damage was caused by you or anybody living with or visiting you).

We may carry out other repairs as emergencies but charge you for them.

Priority 2

Urgent repairs (carried out within seven days)

these are repairs of any fault that affects you but does not put your life or health in danger, or make your home insecure. Examples of such repairs include:

- Seriously broken toilet flush or ball valve
- Damaged sinks
- Damage to the roof or a ceiling, and
- Having no hot water.

Priority 3

Non-urgent repairs (carried out within three weeks) These are repairs to problems that need to be put right but are not likely to cause serious damage to the property.

Examples include:

- Leaking showers
- Cracked toilets
- Faulty light fittings, and
- Broken locks on windows and doors.

Priority 4

Planned repairs (carried out within 16 weeks) these are repairs which are part of a programme of work, such as:

- Plastering work
- Updating baths and wash basins, and
- Improving the outside of properties.

Further details can be found on our website, and you can ask us for details. We may group together some repairs, such as clearing gutters, replacing misted double-glazed units and so on, to reduce costs and provide better value for money.



5. Repairs and Maintenance

What happens when you report a repair?

We will offer you an appointment for work that needs to be carried out on the inside of your property.

If we agree an appointment with you and you do not keep it, we may charge you the cost of us coming out to you and you would need to make another appointment. In some cases, we may need to inspect a fault you have reported. If this is the case, we will make an appointment with you for either a trades person or a surveyor to call and inspect the problem and if any work is required, we will notify you when this work will be carried out.

All our staff and contractors carry photo ID. Please ask to see ID if you are not sure who the caller is.

Servicing gas appliances

By law, we must carry out an annual inspection to your home. This includes checking that any gas supply present in the property is maintained in a safe condition whether there are gas appliances connected to the supply or not.

We will check any gas heating appliances. This includes a service to any tenant owned gas fire, however we will not provide any repairs or replacements to tenant owned appliances. If any faults or repairs are recorded, the engineer will inform you and disconnect the appliance. You must then arrange for a suitable repair or replacement with a qualified contractor. We will write to you when the inspection is due and you must

make arrangements to allow the engineer into your home. He will make a visual check of your gas cooker for safety. If it is faulty, the engineer will inform you and disconnect the appliance. You must then arrange for a suitable repair or replacement with a qualified contractor.

We will provide, where possible, a gas supply in your kitchen for a cooking appliance. This will be a capped gas supply pipe and you will have to arrange for a suitably qualified contractor to supply the necessary components to your gas cooker. We will not repair any cooking appliance in your home or provide the components required for you to repair your own cooking appliance.

If your home contains a solid fuel burning appliance, we are required to gain access to your home to check it at 6 monthly intervals.

The first visit will be to service the appliance and sweep the chimney. The second visit will be to sweep the chimney 6 months later. We will write to you when this is due and you must make satisfactory arrangements to allow us into your home.

If you own your own solid fuel appliance, we will provide a chimney sweep service in the interests of safety to yourselves and neighbouring properties; however we will not provide any repairs or replacements to these appliances. If any faults or repairs are recorded you will be informed, and the appliance will be shut down, you must then make necessary arrangements for a suitably qualified contractor to carry out this work.

5. Repairs and Maintenance

Electric storage heaters

If you have a fault with your electric storage heaters, you can contact Clairglow 01892 531 421 or email servicing@clairglow.co.uk

Gas, water and electricity supplies

You are responsible for arranging and paying for gas, electricity and water supplies. If you have a prepayment meter and you run out of credit, we cannot provide an emergency supply. We will charge you for unnecessary call-outs that result from your supply being cut off by the gas, electricity or water company.

If you disagree with our decision

If we tell you that you are responsible for a repair, and you do not agree, please contact us at Affordablehousing@maidstone.gov.uk 01622602372



6. Improving your Home

Planned maintenance

Planned maintenance is major improvement work that we carry out on a group basis, for example to specified groups or types of properties or to a whole neighbourhood or area. Planned maintenance schemes can cover the installation of central heating, new kitchens and bathrooms, replacement windows and doors, and major repairs to roofs and chimneys. Such schemes help us to reduce costs and enable us to carry out more improvements overall.

Disruption

All work entails some disruption. We will work with you to minimise this and provide you with as much notice as we can of works to be carried out and choices that will be available to you.

We are not normally able to provide decoration or allowances to assist after these improvements have been carried out. If these improvements are part of a structural or health and safety concern then the work must be carried out as instructed.

All improvement works are designed to provide you with a better standard of living; only in exceptional circumstances would a request to not have the work carried out be considered.

Health and safety

Work may involve disturbance, site cabins, materials, scaffolding and deliveries. We cannot relocate customers whilst work is in progress and we will take care to remove any risks to you. However, you must ensure that you adhere to any notices and ensure children and pets are kept well away from works in progress. Please help us by reporting any vandalism.



7. Living in Harmony



Everyone has the right to the quiet enjoyment of their home and its surroundings. Under your tenancy agreement you must not behave in a way that causes nuisance to your neighbours. You are responsible for your behaviour at all times, both in your home and in your neighbourhood. You are also responsible for the behaviour of the rest of your household (including children) and visitors to your home.

Nuisance and anti social behaviour

We want to prevent problems caused by nuisance and anti social behaviour and ask that all tenants and their families are considerate towards their neighbours. You should keep the peace by making sure that you don't create any form of nuisance to others. You can help us to deal with any problems by reporting incidents of anti-social behaviour to us and other agencies. We treat all neighbour nuisance complaints seriously and will take whatever action is necessary to solve the problem

Examples of anti social behaviour:

Noise

Such as loud music, loud dogs, rowdy parties, and persistent car and burglar alarms. Please ensure noise is kept at a reasonable level.

Drug and alcohol abuse

Anti social behaviour can be associated with drug and alcohol abuse, late night rowdy behaviour and a constant stream of visitors can disturb your neighbours.

7. Living in Harmony

Full details of what can be a breach of tenancy can be found in your Tenancy Agreement, however here are some of the more common examples that we deal with.

Pets

We ask that you contact us prior to getting a pet, in case we have any queries. Dogs should not be allowed to roam free or foul the grass verges, paths or communal areas. No animals may be kept without our prior written permission.

Car Parking

You must not block local roadways and other vehicular access, and to keep them, and car parking spaces, clear of unroadworthy vehicles and other obstructions.

You must not park any untaxed vehicle at the Premises or on the land or roads around your property. We may remove any vehicle we think is causing an obstruction, is a nuisance, or is a risk to the health and safety of others.



7. Living in Harmony

Mediation services

As our main aim is to resolve your problem with your neighbours amicably we often use mediation (this involves talking problems over either face to face with a third party or through a third party if you don't feel able to be in the same room to reach an agreement which suits all parties' needs). This can be done either by our staff or, in more complex cases, by our independent mediators.

Safe places to live

We work in very close partnership with the police, and other agencies to tackle issues of crime and anti social behaviour in our neighbourhoods; together we are determined, with your help to deal swiftly and effectively with the perpetrators of crime and anti social behaviour.

If you have information about crime or incidents of anti social behaviour you can speak in confidence to your Housing Officer or the Police.

Taking care of where you live

As well as looking after your home, you are expected to take good care of the area where you live. You must ensure that all refuse and household waste is put into appropriate bin bags, chutes or containers used for the purpose of refuse disposal/recycling and is not left in any communal areas or gardens. To help keep your area a pleasant place to live, you should let us know if something needs doing or if you see someone dumping rubbish or carrying out acts of vandalism or graffiti.

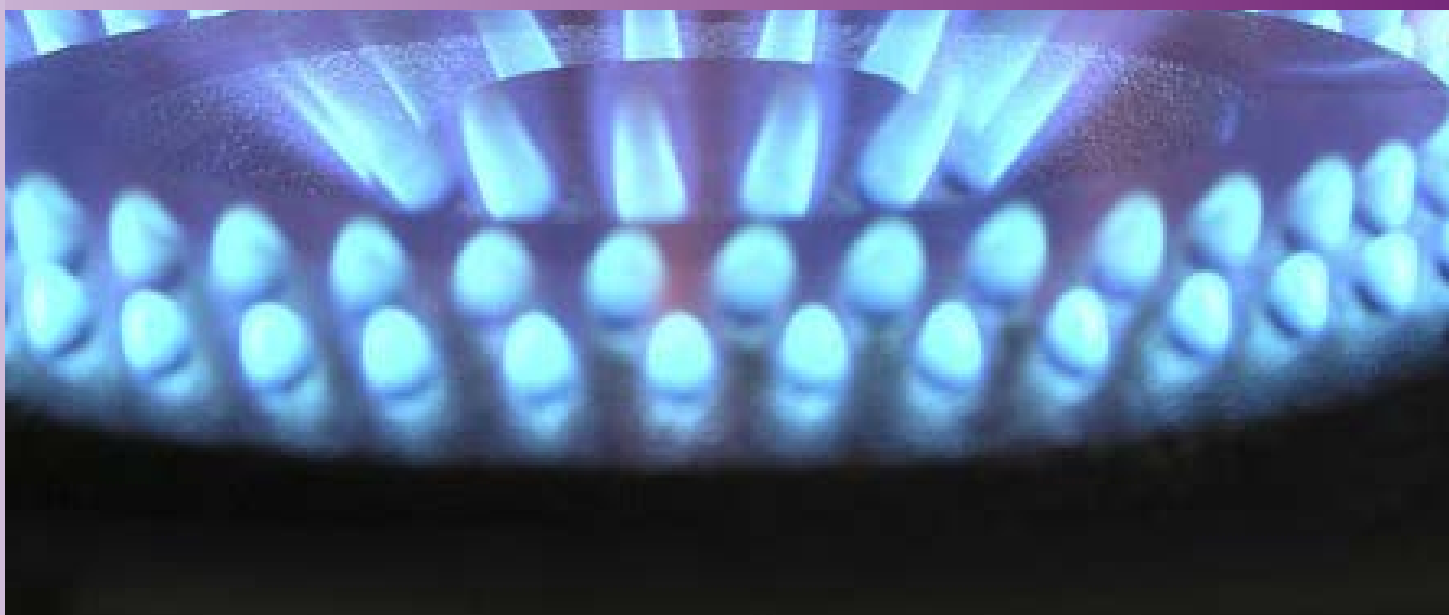
Gardens

It is your responsibility to keep your garden clean and tidy. Grassed areas should be cut regularly and trees and hedges should not obstruct public footpaths or interfere with a neighbour's property. You should not remove any hedges, trees or fences without first obtaining permission. You must not plant trees in your garden without our permission. We will not unreasonably withhold such permission but will take into consideration the suitability of any trees to be planted and the size of your garden or the communal garden area

Storage

Some properties may include loft spaces and other internal storage. Items stored in lofts are more susceptible to damage through damp or mould and so storage of items in these areas should be kept to a minimum. You should also ensure that these items can be easily removed should access be required to maintain or improve your property.

8. Health, Safety and Security



Gas safety

If you smell gas...

- Turn the gas supply off at the meter
- Open the windows and doors to get rid of the gas
- Phone National Grid immediately on **0800 111 999** (free phone number)
- Do not smoke or use matches or cigarette lighters
- Do not turn lights or electrical switches on or off
- Do not try to solve the problem yourself.

Installation of gas appliances

You must always use a 'Gas Safe' registered gas engineer when installing any gas appliance, including gas cookers. To check if a gas engineer is registered call Gas Safe on **0800 408 5500**. You need our written permission to fit any gas appliance, except gas cookers.

Servicing of gas heating equipment

By law we must service and check the safety of all gas appliances every year. When you

are notified that a gas safety check is due to be carried out, you must provide us with reasonable access to your home. We will make an appointment with you, and if you need to change it, please contact us beforehand, the correct maintenance of these appliances is vital to your safety. If we are unable to gain access to your home after reasonable attempts, we may seek court action to arrange access to your home. Once we have completed the safety check we will give you a safety certificate. Different types of boiler will take different amounts of time to service. The engineer will also make a visual check of your cooker and disconnect it if it is dangerous. It will be your responsibility to repair or replace the cooker.

Portable heaters

You must not use an oil, paraffin or gas cylinder heater in your home.

8. Health, Safety and Security

Ceiling fans

Did you know that it can be extremely dangerous to use ceiling fans at the same time as gas fires or gas boilers? Air disturbance from the fan can cause toxic fumes to be released from the heating appliance and enter the room instead of being drawn up by the flue.

Electrical safety

For your safety

- Do not remove, install or repair any electrical fixtures or fittings, unless completed by a qualified electrician, you must also get our permission first
- Make sure your electrical appliance contains the correct fuses. The manufacturer will be able to advise you
- Check flexes and plugs regularly to make sure there are no loose
 - or bare wires
- Do not overload electrical sockets
- Do not touch fittings or exposed wires with anything wet
- Make sure you know how to turn off the supply at the mains

Water safety

Make sure you know where the stop tap is to turn off the main water supply in case of a leak it is usually under the sink. If you

are unsure where it is then look for the yellow label on the inside of the kitchen sink unit. This will tell you where the stop tap is located. It is important that you check your stop tap is working properly on a regular basis - always turn it slowly. We recommend that you turn off your water supply at the stop tap if you go away on holiday. Never paint a stop tap as it becomes extremely difficult to turn on and off.

It is important that you regularly run all taps within the property and ensure your shower head is cleaned and disinfected as part of your usual cleaning routine.

Asbestos

As mentioned on page 12 of this handbook, as a secure tenant you have the right to make improvements to your home, as long as you gain our written permission first.

If you are carrying out any "intrusive works", for example replacing a bathroom or kitchen, you need to consider whether there may be asbestos within the property. You can do this by ensuring your contractor obtains an asbestos survey from a UKATA surveyor prior to starting any works. This will also be something we would need you to do before any permission for improvements was granted.

8. Health, Safety and Security

In the past, asbestos was used as fire protection or an insulation material. It was banned in 1999, but where it already exists it can be left in place if it is safe; this means that it is not damaged or releasing fibres into the air that could be breathed in. Please remember that if there is asbestos in your home it does not necessarily mean that you will be exposed to these fibres unless it is damaged.

If asbestos is found in your home and we think it is likely to be a problem we will take all necessary steps to ensure that it is safely removed or made safe so that there is no risk of fibres escaping into the air. If there is found to be asbestos in your home which isn't harmful then you should follow these asbestos do's and don'ts:

- DO keep away from any damaged products which may contain asbestos
- DO inform us straight away if you have concerns about any products in your home
- DON'T carry out DIY works including drilling, sanding or stripping of any products known to contain asbestos or if you suspect something might contain asbestos
- DON'T wipe, sweep or vacuum dust or debris that may contain asbestos
- REMEMBER, asbestos material in good condition should be left alone

Evacuation

We recommend you plan an escape route in advance should fire break out in your home and that all household members know what to do. Close all the doors on your way out to prevent the fire spreading.

Smoke alarms

If your home is not already fitted with a smoke alarm let us know, we install them free of charge in hallways and landings. Check your smoke alarms regularly to make sure they are working.

Radon

Radon is a colourless, odourless radioactive gas. It's formed by the radioactive decay of small amounts of uranium that occur naturally in all rocks and soils. The level of radon gas is dependent on the geology of where you live

If we install a meter in your home to read radon levels please ensure no-one touches or moves it as this can effect the readings. Once we have collected and looked at the meter we may need to install a fan or pump to help control the levels of radon in your home. This is usually a precautionary measure but its important that if you do have a fan or pump fitted that it has an active power supply at all times.





8. Health, Safety and Security

Extractor fans

If your home is fitted with extractor fans in the kitchen and/or bathroom, it is your responsibility to clean them out every few months. A build up of dirt and dust can cause them to set on fire. If a fire starts get out, stay out and call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999.

Home security

Most burglaries happen during the daytime when people are out and the house looks empty. Potential burglars look for signs that tell them that you are out and there is something worth stealing. You can take some simple, but effective, measures to prevent your home being an easy target for burglars.

- Leave a light on at night when you go out and draw the curtains
- so it looks like someone is still at home
- Do not leave windows and doors unlocked or leave keys in doors even when you are at home
- Do not leave valuables visible through windows
- If you have a door chain, peep hole or entry phone, make sure you use it when answering the door

- Ask unknown callers for identification and check it carefully, for your safety all our staff carry photo ID
- If you are going away, cancel milk and newspapers etc, and ask a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your home whilst you're away. It is advised that if you are away from home during the cold weather, to leave your heating on low to reduce the risk of frozen pipes
- Do not leave empty boxes outside your home that advertise you have just bought an expensive piece of equipment
- If you live in a block of flats, do not let people into the block
- unless you know them.

Home contents insurance

The structure of your home is insured by Maidstone Borough Council against fire and other damage. However, we are not responsible for the contents of your home (e.g. furniture, carpets, personal belongings and decoration etc.) For this reason, we strongly advise you to insure your personal possessions against fire, flood, theft, burst/leaking pipes and vandalism.

9. Heating and Energy Advice



This section tells you how to control and get the most out of the heating system and your home. Also included are tips and advice on how to control mould and condensation.

Controlling the heating in your home

Adjusting the thermostat

You can control the temperature in your home by adjusting the room thermostat. This is usually located in the hall or living room. You should set the temperature between 18 and 21 degrees centigrade. To save energy you could set the room temperature as low as comfortably possible. Turning down the thermostat by just 1 degree can cut fuels bills by up to 10%.

Using radiator controls

You can also control the temperature in individual rooms by using the controls on the side of your radiators (called 'thermostatic radiator valves'). This allows you to keep different rooms at different temperatures i.e. keep rooms that you don't use at lower temperatures than those you do. If you do not have radiator controls, you may still be able to turn a radiator off by closing the ordinary radiator valve.

9. Heating and Energy Advice

Setting the timer

A timer allows you to set your heating and hot water to come on and go off when you want it to. You should set the system to come on about half an hour before you want the house to become warm and go off half an hour before you want the house to cool off completely. You probably won't need your heating and hot water to be switched on all the time, therefore you should avoid using the 24-hour constant setting.

Energy saving tip

It is better, especially in winter to keep your heating on low for long periods rather than on high for short periods. This will keep the structure of your house warm, help prevent frozen/burst pipes and be more economical in the long run. If you are leaving your home unoccupied for more than a couple of days you should leave your heating on low. You should turn your water off at the stop tap, please contact us for further advice.

Remotely controlled systems

Please note that we do not allow the installation of systems that allow your heating system to be controlled remotely or via your smart phone.

Electrical storage heaters

Electric storage heaters charge up during the night when electricity is cheaper then release stored up heat the next day. Most storage heaters have 2 controls:

An Input control (sometimes called 'charge' or 'auto' set control). This controls how much heat is stored and how much electricity is used. The lowest setting is suitable for spring, autumn or a cool summer. To stop the heater storing any heat, switch off at the wall.

An Output control (sometimes called 'boost' or 'room temperature'). This controls how quickly heat leaves the heater. On its highest setting, the stored heat is used up faster. Some storage heaters have an automatic output control. This means a thermostat controls how quickly the heat is released.

Gas warm air heating

Warm air systems usually have a thermostat and a timer/ programmer to control the temperature (similar to gas central heating). The grills in each room can also be opened and closed manually to increase or decrease the amount of heat needed.



9. Heating and Energy Advice

Hot water

A hot water thermostat is fitted to your hot water tank or cylinder, which you can turn up and down according to how hot you want your water. 60 degrees centigrade should be adequate for washing and bathing.

Reporting repairs and faults

For faulty heating call Clairglow at 01892 531 421 or email servicing@clairglow.co.uk

Controlling mould and condensation

If your home is damp or you find mould patches on walls, furniture or clothing, the likely cause is condensation. Condensation occurs on cold surfaces - this may be the window glass in mild cases, or walls, ceilings or even the floor tiles. Condensation occurs when moist air cools on these surfaces, leaving dampness, which may show as black spots, green mould or have a musty smell. Here are some tips to help reduce moisture:

- Open windows for a while each day to allow a change of air
- Do not cover up any air vents
- Leave your heating on a low level all the time in very cold weather
- Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well ventilated rooms and avoid drying clothes on radiators
- Keep your home clutter free so that air can circulate in your home
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other rooms
- Open windows or put a fan on when cooking or washing to allow steam to escape
- Cover pans when cooking and do not boil for any longer than necessary
- Vent any tumble dryers to the outside
- Wipe down any surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould



If you continue to have problems with damp or mould, contact us at 01622 602 376 or email Affordablehousing@maidstone.gov.uk

Energy efficiency

The energy saving trust can provide more information on energy efficiency and possible energy saving grants which may be available to you. For more information call the Energy Saving Advice Service on 0800 512 012.



10. Getting Involved



What is tenant involvement?

Put simply 'tenant involvement' are the opportunities that you, our customers, have in helping to shape the decisions made by Maidstone Borough Council.

We want our customers to be at the heart of everything we do. By working together we can improve the way we deliver our services both now and in the future. We are committed to involving tenants when making decisions about your home and the neighbourhood you live in. It is important to us that we keep you informed. We know that your involvement will make a difference.

By getting involved you can:

- Make your area a better place to live
- Provide your opinion on what home improvements should be made
- Give us your views on the services you receive
- Help us to better understand the needs of all our customers
- Help us provide better quality customer focused services
- Make a difference to housing in Maidstone

How can you have your say?

There are a variety of options for you to become involved. We want you to provide us with your views, opinions and experiences. You can choose the level of involvement that suits you best depending on how much time you have to spare and your interests.

Customer feedback surveys

We carry out various customer satisfaction surveys. These are usually multiple-choice questions and provide us with a snapshot view of tenants' opinions on a particular service area. This is your opportunity to help us improve our service, by telling us how good services really are, if they are meeting your needs and what improvements we should make.

Tenant consultation questionnaires

We carry out regular consultations to find out your opinions and give you the opportunity to comment on changes to housing related policies and the delivery of housing related services.

11. Ending your tenancy

If you are thinking of moving and ending your tenancy with Maidstone Borough Council, there are important things that need to be done.

- You must give the Council at least 4 weeks' notice in writing if you plan to leave your home and end your tenancy. This is a condition of the tenancy and gives us time to make arrangements for a new tenant without too much delay.
- You can give notice by calling 01622 602 376. We will need the address you are moving to and the date when you want your tenancy to end.
- When we receive your notice we will send you a letter or email confirming this and giving details of any rent which is due. We will also contact you to arrange an inspection of your property before you move. This is so we can see if any repair work is needed before the property is empty. We will also install a keysafe for you to leave your keys in on the day you vacate the property.
- Tenancies must end on a Monday - you must pay rent up to that day.
- If we do not hear from you by 10am on the Monday that your tenancy is due to end, you will be charged an additional week's rent for each extra week (or part week) that you have the keys for.

Before you leave the property

You must make sure that:

- The property has been left clean and tidy;
- All furniture, carpets and your belongings have been removed;
- You have cleared any rubbish and unwanted items from the house and garden.
- You return all keys to the Premises (including all fobs, pre-paid meter keys, gate keys and any other keys).
- You can arrange for large items to be removed for a small charge. You can visit our website for further details.
- Any necessary repairs which are your responsibility (as defined in your tenancy agreement) have been carried out.
- You will be charged for the cost of putting right any repair which is your responsibility, and the removal of any rubbish or unwanted items left at the property.
- Before you leave the property, remember to turn the water off at the stop tap, and the gas and electricity off at the meter.



11. Ending your tenancy



Other things to remember

- You should contact your Gas and Electricity Suppliers to arrange to have your meters read before you hand your keys in. They usually need at least 48 hours' notice. Look in the phone book or on your bill for their local number. It is also important that you tell us who your current suppliers are please fill in these details in on the Termination form.
- If you have a telephone, the company that provides your telephone line should be told that you are moving so that they can disconnect it.
- The Royal Mail will re-direct your mail to your new address for a charge - for advice email at royalmail.com or call into any Post Office for an application form.
- If you receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit you will need to make a new claim for your new property.
- If you receive any other benefits, you will need to tell the Benefits Agency or Universal Credit of your move so that you they can up-date their records.



11. Ending your tenancy



Other things to remember

What?

Hand in Notice

Inform Gas & Electricity Suppliers

Inform Telephone Company

Inform Water Company

Inform Benefits Agency

Inform Bank/Building Society

Inform Insurance Company

Inform TV Licensing

Inform DVLA

Re-direct Mail

Turn off water, electricity & gas

Dispose of any unwanted items

Hand in Keys

When?

4 weeks before leaving

48 hours before leaving

7 days before leaving

Once date of move known

Once date of move known

Once date of move known

Once date of move known

Once date of move known

Once date of move known

7 days before leaving

Before leaving the property

Before handing keys in

12 noon on day tenancy ends

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Further information: maidstone.gov.uk/housing