

February 2026

Issue 17

Tenants' Open Voice

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



Intergenerational Art Exhibition

See page 9

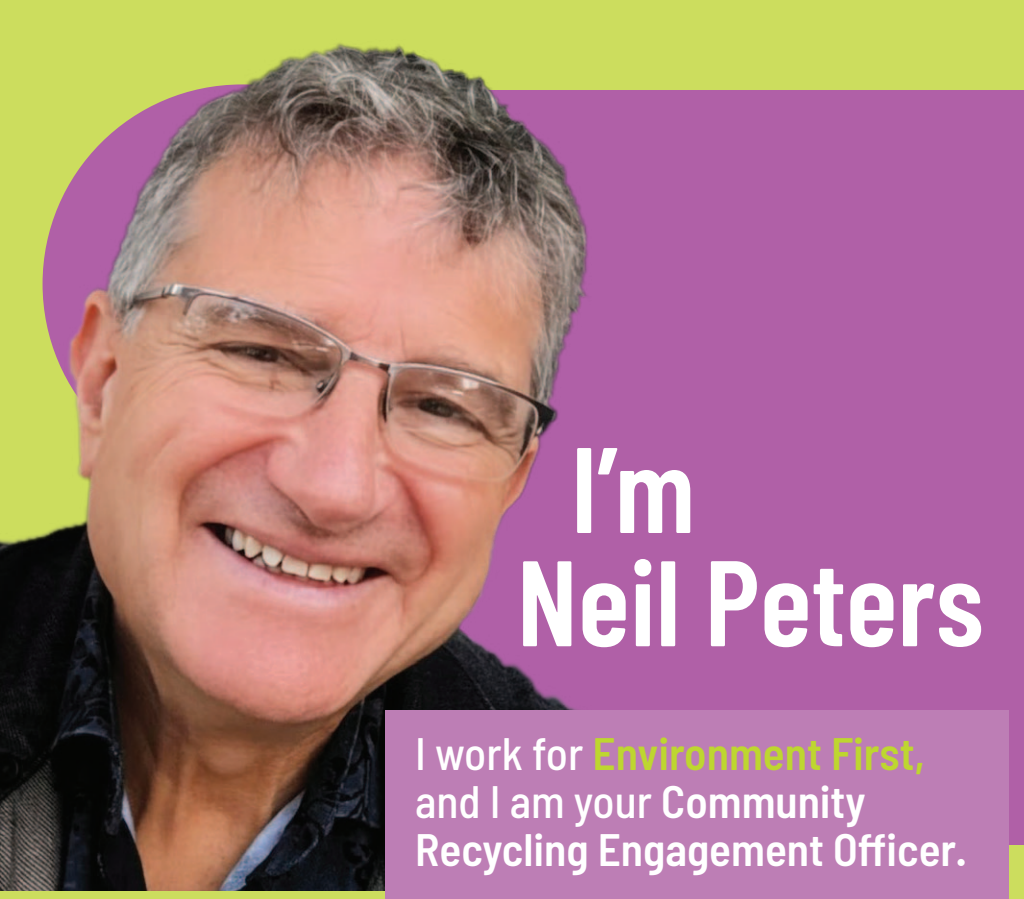


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lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk



I'm Neil Peters

I work for **Environment First**, and I am your **Community Recycling Engagement Officer**.

Experience and Community Connection

I've dedicated my career to working with our residents, having served the Local Authority for 16 years. For the last four years, I've been entirely focused on this engagement role, which I find incredibly rewarding.

Before this, I was a Senior Advisor with the Neighbourhood First Team. I've been involved in recycling since the early days when we first introduced home recycling collections in Eastbourne, and I've also worked as a Community Enforcement Officer, primarily across Eastbourne and more recently venturing into the Lewes area.



Why I love my work

Throughout my time with the Council, I've always been customer-focused and what you might call "front line." Each role has brought me into direct contact with you, the residents, whether it's advising on waste and recycling management or during fly-tipping investigations. I really value these interactions and enjoy working directly with the community to ensure we manage our resources effectively.

Before joining the council

Before I joined the Council, I worked in the construction industry as a steel erector, installing steel-frame buildings across the country. I also had the unique experience of working for the F1A, building the temporary media stages at various race circuits all over the world.

Let's ensure everyone can recycle

A key part of my job is ensuring that everyone has the means to recycle. If you do not currently have a household recycling bin, please contact the Council, and we will get one to you as soon as possible.



What I do in my spare time

When I'm not working, you can usually find me at a pub quiz! I'm an avid quizzer, attending a weekly quiz at my local and often participating in charity events. My team is known as the BOHO Rats, and yes, we sometimes manage to win!

“ I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to build a greener and cleaner community. ”



Your voice matters!

Get Involved!

At Homes First, we want all tenants to feel heard, valued and represented – no matter your background, age, ability, culture, gender identity, or how long you've lived in your home.

That's why we're especially keen to hear from tenants who may not have had the chance to get involved before – including people from ethnic minority communities, disabled tenants, LGBTQ+ tenants, younger residents, and those with caring responsibilities.

Tenant involvement isn't just about meetings – it's about sharing your views in a way that works for you, whether it's giving feedback on services, joining a focus group, contributing ideas for Tenants' Open Voice, or simply chatting to us about your experiences, your perspective matters.

By getting involved, you can help shape our services, improve neighbourhoods, and ensure our communications and decisions reflect the whole community.

We're here to support you every step of the way – with flexible options, accessible formats, and a friendly team who'll listen.

If you'd like to know more, please get in touch – we'd love to hear from you. Email: TenantInvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Let's make sure everyone has a seat at the table.



Tenant Satisfaction Measures



Lewes District Council

As you can see here, improvements were seen in most areas. Although some measures dipped, including *Complaints Handling*, which fell from 44% to 34%, the overall pattern shows continued progress in core housing services. Overall satisfaction has risen this quarter, increasing from 61% last quarter to **67%** now.

Overall Satisfaction

Last Quarter **61%** **67%**



Time taken - last repair
Last Quarter **70%**
68%



Listen and acts
Last Quarter **48%**
53%



Well maintained home
Last Quarter **68%**
68%



Communal area clean and well maintained
Last Quarter **58%**
59%



Kept informed
Last Quarter **76%**
72%



Safe home
Last Quarter **76%**
79%



Positive contribution to neighbourhood
Last Quarter **55%**
60%



Treated fairly and with respect
Last Quarter **68%**
79%



Repairs - Last 12 months
Last Quarter **73%**
75%



Handling of anti-social behaviour
Last Quarter **48%**
53%



Complaints handling
Last Quarter **44%**
34%



Eastbourne has seen strong improvements across most measures this quarter, reflecting broad improvements in most service areas.

Significant rises were recorded in *Repairs Completed in the last 12 months*, *Feeling Safe at Home*, *Well maintained Home*, *Communal Areas*, and *Complaints handling*.

Overall satisfaction increased from 68% last quarter to **77%**.

Overall Satisfaction

Last Quarter **68%** **77%**



Time taken - last repair
Last Quarter **63%**
76%



Listen and acts
Last Quarter **51%**
60%



Well maintained home
Last Quarter **64%**
78%



Communal area clean and well maintained
Last Quarter **59%**
69%



Kept informed
Last Quarter **70%**
75%



Safe home
Last Quarter **72%**
83%



Positive contribution to neighbourhood
Last Quarter **53%**
69%



Treated fairly and with respect
Last Quarter **69%**
79%



Repairs - Last 12 months
Last Quarter **73%**
81%



Handling of anti-social behaviour
Last Quarter **58%**
63%



Complaints handling
Last Quarter **15%**
35%

Repairs and Maintenance Contracts Update

Our current repairs and maintenance contract with Mears ends on 31 March 2026. Over the past year, tenants and councillor representatives took part in our Shaping the Future workshops, helping us understand what matters most to you. Your feedback has guided us in choosing the new contractors who will start working with us from 1 April 2026. You can see the new contractor logos below, so if you spot these teams out and about, you'll know exactly who they are.

The new contractors are:

Repairs and Voids

Lewes and Eastbourne



Aids and Adaptations

Lewes



SMG Building & Property Maintenance

Eastbourne

BOOKER & BEST LTD.

Windows and Doors

Lewes and Eastbourne

BOOKER & BEST LTD.

Drainage

Lewes and Eastbourne



Damp and Mould

Lewes and Eastbourne



Fencing

Lewes and Eastbourne



Roofing

Lewes and Eastbourne



For you, things will continue as normal

You'll report repairs in the same way, and we'll keep you updated as the new contractors get started. While there may be a small dip in performance during the handover period, though this should be short lived, and our aim is for you to see an improvement in service as everything settles.

We'll also be hosting a "Meet the Contractors" event in the summer, giving you the chance to talk to the new teams, hear what they'll be doing, and share your ideas for community projects. More information on this event will be circulated nearer the time.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in the workshops – your insight has helped shape a service that better reflects your needs.

If you need to report a repair

The quickest way
is to use the online form:

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/repairs

You can also contact the
Customer First team by phone:

01273 471600 (Lewes)

01323 410000 (Eastbourne)

and if you're unsure what type of
repair you need to report,
they can help advise you.

Glendale announcement

Glendale

We are pleased to announce that **Glendale** has been appointed as our new grounds maintenance contractor from **1 April 2026!**

Glendale will be responsible for grass cutting, shrub maintenance and pathway weeding across our estates. The new service is based on a clear schedule, with work carried out at set times throughout the year. This approach focuses on regular frequency rather than grass height, helping to keep shared spaces looking tidier all year round!

These changes are designed to provide a more reliable and consistent grounds maintenance service for all residents!

Managing anti-social behaviour and hate incidents

Don't suffer in silence

We take anti social behaviour (ASB) and hate incidents very seriously.

Our Tenancy Resolution Team manages serious reports, including hate crime and complex cases. ASB can affect how safe you feel in your home and community, and we will do all we reasonably can to prevent and deal with it.

If you are having problems in your neighbourhood, please tell us. We use different tools to help stop ASB, such as warnings, behaviour contracts, and Community Protection Warnings or Notices. For serious cases, we may issue a Notice or work with Sussex Police on a Closure Notice.

You can report ASB in person, by phone, email, letter, or through our website: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/report-anti-social-behaviour-noise-and-nuisance

In an emergency, always call 999. For non urgent crime, call 101. We will keep you updated and agree how best to contact you.



Our updated "Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime" booklet is coming soon – packed with clear guidance on key issues and how we can work together to resolve them.



Help if **conflict** is affecting your home



Conflict at home can feel stressful, especially if it affects your housing.

If you are having problems with housemates, family, your landlord, or neighbours, support is available.

Mediation services

Mediation Plus offer free, confidential help. Mediators listen, do not take sides, and help everyone find fair solutions. Mediation is voluntary. Mediators adapt the way they work with you as necessary – Mediation does not always need you to sit face-to-face with another party.

Who can use it?

Tenants and leaseholders in Eastbourne or Lewes District can access these services. Mediation Plus has over 20 years' experience.

What to expect

The process includes:

- contacting the service
- mediators checking everyone agrees to take part
- individual meetings
- a joint session to talk
- a goodwill agreement if one is reached

If mediation isn't suitable, you may be offered Conflict Coaching for extra one-to-one support.



Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils partner with Anglo Doorstep Collections

Do you have unwanted clothes, shoes, or small household items?

Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils have partnered with Anglo Doorstep Collections to make donating and recycling easy from your home.

How it works: • Book a free collection online or by phone • Bag your items • Leave them outside on the agreed day.

If your goods have not been collected by **5pm** on the day of collection, please take them back inside and contact Anglo Doorstep Collections for further information.



Book your free collection

w: www.anglo-doorstep-collections.co.uk

t: 0800 033 7940

e: info@anglo-doorstep-collections.co.uk

You can donate clothes, shoes, accessories, bedding, towels, and small household items. Everything is reused or recycled, helping reduce waste and support good causes.

Our commitment to tackling domestic abuse

At Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council, your safety and wellbeing always come first. For the past three years, we have been working towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, a national award that shows we offer strong, supportive services for people affected by domestic abuse. We are now close to achieving it.

This means:

- staff have specialist training to give safe, caring support
- more help and resources are available
- extra safety measures are offered to tenants who stay in their homes

Our teams also support people who need to leave urgently, providing safe accommodation and ongoing help.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, please reach out.

You are not alone.

HOMES FIRST ESTATE SERVICES

working in partnership with
Neighbourhood Housing • Property Services
Retirement Housing • Environment First



Working together for safer homes

This guidance applies to flats and buildings with shared communal areas.

Your Neighbourhood and Estates team is here to help keep our buildings safe, welcoming, and well cared for. Fire safety is a key priority, and keeping communal areas completely clear is essential.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy showed how important safe escape routes are. Items like buggies, bikes, doormats, or other belongings left in corridors or shared spaces can block exits or add fuel to a fire, putting lives at risk.

To keep everyone safe, we have a zero tolerance approach: no items can be left in communal areas, and anything left will be removed, with costs charged for collection.

You can help by storing all belongings inside your home and reporting any hazards or abandoned items. By working together, we keep our homes safe for all.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Homes First Estate Services team on:

estates.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Accessing Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS)

The Non Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) helps patients who cannot travel to their medical appointments in any other way because of a medical need. If you are eligible, you can book your journey through your local provider. In Sussex, this is EMED Group on **0300 777 4444**. If you are not eligible, you can look at other options such as volunteer drivers, public transport, or asking a friend or family member to help.

For eligible patients:

- Call **EMED Group** on **0300 777 4444**
- You will have a confidential assessment to check eligibility
- Once registered, you can book future trips online through Patient Zone

If not eligible:

- You may be able to claim travel costs through the NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme
- Ask someone to accompany you
- Use volunteer driver schemes or local transport
- If you cannot attend, contact the hospital or clinic to rearrange



Message in a bottle

The Lions Club "Message in a Bottle" scheme, is a free service that provides a plastic bottle to store vital medical and personal information for emergency services.

The bottle is kept in the fridge, and stickers on the outside of the fridge and front door alert first responders to look for the information, which includes details on medical conditions, allergies, medications, and emergency contacts.



How to get and use a "Message in a Bottle"

- Obtain a kit: Shortly RHO's will be receiving a supply from the Lions Club and will distribute to all residents once received.
- Complete the form: Fill out the form with your personal details, emergency contacts, and medical information, such as known conditions, allergies, and a copy of your repeat prescription list.
- Place the form in the bottle: Put the completed form inside the bottle.
- Place the bottle in the fridge: Store the bottle in the fridge, ideally in the door compartment so it's easy to see.
- Apply the stickers: Place one of the green stickers on the fridge door and the other on the inside of your front door to alert emergency services that you are part of the scheme.

Benefits of the scheme

- **Provides critical information:** In an emergency, the bottle gives first responders vital information to help you quickly and effectively.
- **Ensures quick access:** The stickers ensure that emergency services will look for the bottle in the fridge as part of the protocol.
- **Protects against fire:** The fridge is chosen because its contents are often protected from fire, meaning your vital information will likely survive even in a fire at home.
- **Peace of mind:**
It provides peace of mind for you and your loved ones, knowing that your medical details will be available if you are unable to provide them yourself.



For more information, or to order a Message in a Bottle if you do not live in Retirement Housing, please visit the *Lions International* website:

www.lionsmessageinabottle.co.uk

Mobility Scooter Charging

New Annual Fee from April 1st, 2026

From April 1st, 2026, a new policy will introduce an annual charge for residents who charge their mobility scooters within retirement housing courts.

The new fee—set at £60 per year—is designed to help cover the rising costs of electricity and maintenance associated with keeping shared charging areas safe and reliable.

Why is the charge being introduced?

Mobility scooters are an essential lifeline for many residents, helping maintain freedom and independence. However, as their use has grown, so have the demands on communal power supplies. The new annual fee helps ensure that:

- Charging points remain safe and compliant with fire regulations
- Electricity costs are fairly shared among those who use the facilities
- Maintenance and upgrades to charging bays can continue when needed

What this means for residents

- Residents who charge a mobility scooter or other approved electric mobility equipment within the building's designated areas will pay £60 per year, these residents will be invoiced and can choose to pay annually upfront or spread the cost out.
- The fee covers unlimited charging, this flat rate charge for all means residents won't need to track individual electricity use.
- Those who do not own or charge a scooter, e bike or similar equipment will not be affected.

Supporting independence safely

The introduction of this charge ensures that retirement courts can continue to provide safe, well-managed scooter charging for everyone who relies on their scooter day to-day. If you have questions about how the new fee will be collected, where your nearest charging points are or how to join a wait list for a mobility scooter charging point, your retirement housing officer will be happy to help.

Other high-risk equipment

The updated policy also applies to e bikes and stand up electric scooters, which are becoming more common in retirement housing and carry similar fire safety risks if stored or charged inside flats. These items should be stored and charged in designated scooter rooms, with mobility scooters taking priority for available spaces.



Home Ownership Team

welcomes Leaseholders at Lewes Drop-In

The Home Ownership team, along with the support from the Homes First Property Surveyor and Senior Housing Officer welcomed Leaseholders at their drop-in session held in November 2025.

It was a successful session enabling Leaseholders to discuss any concerns, raise questions and meet some of our staff members, the Home Ownership Team will

be running these sessions annually, both in Eastbourne and Lewes area, leaseholders will be notified in advance. If you have any queries that you would like to discuss then please email: leasehold@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk and the team will be happy to assist, you can also find leasehold specific information at: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/leaseholders



The Team (l to r): **Nikki Richardson** – Housing Operations Manager, Retirement Housing, **George Clarkson** – Surveying Services Manager, **Karen Taylor** – Home Ownership Officer, **Helen Richardson** – Home Ownership Manager, **Lorraine Barclay** – Home Ownership Officer

Intergenerational art project



Winning artists who took part in a unique project that connected local students with retirees were presented with awards at a special ceremony.

The initiative was a partnership between the Retirement Housing team at Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils and Chailey High School in South Chailey, near Lewes, with the purpose of commissioning new art and photography.

All previous artwork in communal spaces in the councils' retirement housing had to be removed because of fire compliancy rules following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The project has seen the school's GCSE students create pieces based on a theme of 'Sussex Icons' including landscapes, buildings, and seaside scenes. Tenant artists from the retirement homes worked with the students to inspire their artwork, fostering a strong intergenerational connection.

People were invited to attend a public exhibition of the work at Marine Workshops in Newhaven and vote for their favourite piece of art. The top-voted works showcased a diverse range of styles.

Councillor Mark Slater, Cabinet Member for Tenants and Those in Housing Need, said: "Thank you to everyone who attended the exhibition and took the time to vote. It has been wonderful to see the community come together to support these young artists. We very much look forward to seeing these pieces permanently displayed in our retirement housing for people to enjoy for many years to come."

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council, said: "The turnout today is testament to the fantastic quality of the work on display and also to how much we value the connections between different generations in our district. This partnership has exceeded expectations, successfully turning a safety requirement into a meaningful catalyst for community cohesion and artistic talent."



Legionella

What it is and how to stay safe

What is Legionella?

Legionella is a type of bacteria that grow in water systems where water is warm and not moving.

If tiny water droplets are breathed in, it can cause Legionnaires' disease (a type of pneumonia) or a milder illness called Pontiac fever. You cannot catch it from drinking water or from another person.

How Does It Spread?

Legionella spreads when contaminated water turns into a fine spray or mist and is breathed in.

Common sources include:

- taps or showers that are not used often
- water features or fountains
- hot water cylinders that are not well maintained
- some air conditioning systems

Warm, still water is the main risk, so regular flushing and maintenance are important.

Responsibilities in Retirement Housing

Retirement Housing Officer Responsibilities

Our Retirement Housing Officers help reduce the risk of legionella by:

- making sure water systems are regularly serviced by our contractor, Safe Water
- carrying out weekly flushing of communal taps and showers
- entering properties (with permission) to flush water if residents are away for long periods or if a property is empty
- keeping clear records of checks, servicing, and any repairs
- giving tenants simple safety guidance and responding to concerns quickly

Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants can help keep everyone safe by:

- using taps and showers regularly
- reporting unusual smells, discoloured water, or low water temperatures
- running taps and showers after being away for more than a week
- following any advice from housing staff

Staying Safe Together

With regular maintenance from staff and simple steps from tenants, the risk of legionella stays very low, helping ensure a safe and comfortable home for everyone.





Food Waste Collections in Eastbourne Spring 2026

Eastbourne will launch free weekly food waste collections from spring 2026, funded by government. Residents will receive an indoor and outdoor food caddy plus compostable liners. Collections will be carried out using new electric vehicles. More information: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/FoodWaste



Waste collection changes for Lewes

From February 2026, Lewes district moved to alternate weekly collections. This means recycling and refuse are now collected every two weeks, on alternate weeks. To make things simple, your collection will always be on the same day each week.

Food waste in Lewes will continue to be collected every week using electric vehicles. This may take place at a different time of day from your refuse or recycling collection.

All residents will receive a new collection calendar. You can also download yours at www.EnvironmentFirst.co.uk.

Please put your bins at the edge of your property by 6am on collection day, and bring them back in as soon as possible so paths stay clear for people with mobility needs.

There are several options to help residents manage alternate weekly collections, including bigger bins, extra recycling bins, food waste recycling, and assisted collections. These can be requested at www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/1161/New-and-replacement-bins

Residents who produce one bag or more of non-infectious medical waste (such as incontinence pads) can request weekly collections through the website.

What can I put in my recycling bin?

- plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays, bags and tubes
- cardboard boxes and packets
- metal tins, cans, aerosols, foil and trays
- glass bottles and jars (lids recycled separately)
- paper, letters, envelopes, magazines, books and wrapping paper (not foil/glitter)

A full list is available at www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/wasteAtoZ

All recycling to be loose, clean, dry and flattened.

Please put items in clean, dry and loose



Important changes to waste recycling centres – **book before you go**

You must now book a timeslot before visiting any East Sussex household waste recycling centre. Book online for the same day or up to 14 days ahead at:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling/household-waste-recycling-sites

Arrive within your 30 minute slot and bring your booking confirmation, proof of East Sussex residency, and any hire vehicle paperwork. Visitors from outside East Sussex will be charged £8.75 per visit.

Making a Complaint to the Council

We know sometimes we do not always get it right and you can make a complaint if you are unhappy with the Council's service, actions, or failures that affect you as a tenant. This includes poor housing conditions, disrepair, missed repairs, safety issues, maladministration, or repeated service failures.



Our Complaints Process

- Stage 1: We investigate your concerns and send a response using your preferred contact method.
- Stage 2: If you are still unhappy, you can ask for a review of how your complaint was handled.

How to Complain

- Online: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk
- Email: customerfirst@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk (include details, the impact, and what outcome you want. Mark the subject as Complaint.)
- Phone: **01273 471600** (Lewes)
01323 410000 (Eastbourne)
- Post: • **6 High Street, Lewes BN7 2AD**
• **Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne BN21 4TW**

Please tell us if you need support to make a complaint. We can make reasonable adjustments, such as in-person support, social media or webchat.

Timescales

- We aim to acknowledge complaints within five working days.
- Stage 1: Up to 10 working days.
- Stage 2: Up to 20 working days.

Your response will explain whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

If you remain unhappy, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman online at:

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

or by telephone: **0300 111 3000**

For other Council services (benefits, Council Tax, social care), contact the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman online:

www.lgo.org.uk or call: **0300 061 0614**

Keep records, including dates, what happened, and photos for repairs.

Under Awaab's Law (Oct 2025) we must take quick action on damp and mould reports.

We aim to resolve issues promptly and improve services based on your feedback.



Your Data

Understanding the needs of the people we support is very important to us. To do this better, we are improving how we collect, record, and use information about our tenants and their households, including any support needs you may have. This helps make sure our services are fair, accessible, and shaped around the people who use them.

We are committed to providing inclusive, person-centred support, and to treating everyone with dignity, respect, and understanding. If your circumstances change, or if there is something you would like us to know that would help us support you, please tell us as you normally would – either through our website or by speaking with your Housing Officer.

We fully follow the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). If you would like more information about how your data is managed, please visit www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk and search for "privacy notice".

Your mental health matters

A handy directory for East Sussex residents

Here's your guide for support:

1. Crisis and Suicide Prevention

- **Immediate danger?** Call **999** or go to A&E.
- **Urgent help** (same or next day): Call **NHS 111** and select mental health (free, 24/7).
- **Text support:** Text **SUSSEX** to **85258** for free, confidential help.
- **Samaritans:** Call **116 123** (24/7).
- **Childline:** Under 19? Call **0800 1111**.
- **Stay Alive App:** Download for tools and info to keep safe in crisis.

2. Mental Health & Wellbeing

- **Talking Therapies:** Free NHS support for anxiety and depression via **Health in Mind** – **0300 003 0130**
- **Community Services:**
 - **UOK East Sussex:** Call **0808 196 1768** for wellbeing centres and digital support.
 - **Seaview:** Open access centre in St Leonards for those facing homelessness. **01424 717981**.
- **Creative Wellbeing** – Workshops and social activities.
Arts on Prescription (Hastings): **07966 442281**, or **Compass Arts** (Eastbourne): **07889 805022**.

3. Support for Everyone

- **Neurodiversity:** Help for autism and ADHD.
Amaze: **01273 772289**.
- **LGBTQ+ Support:**
MindOut: Mental health advocacy and counselling. Call **0300 7729855**.
Allsorts Youth Project: For under 26s. Call **01273 721100**
- **Care for the Carers** offers advice and support. Call **020 7378 4999**.

4. Self-Help & Peer Support

- **Every Mind Matters:** Tips for everyday wellbeing. www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters
- **Walking Groups:** Join **East Sussex Health Walks** for fresh air and company. www.tcv.org.uk/southeast/sussex
- **Peer Support Online:** **Side-by-Side** connects you with others who understand. <https://sidebyside.mind.org.uk>



5. Addiction Services

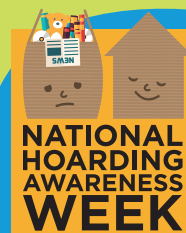
- **Drug & Alcohol Support:** STAR – **0300 303 8160**
- **Gambling Help:** Free support via **Breakeven**. www.breakeven.org.uk/contact-us
- **Gaming Disorders:** NHS service for gamers and families. The National Centre for Gaming Disorders: www.cnwl.nhs.uk/national-centre-gaming-disorders

6. Money Worries

- **Cost of Living Support:** East Sussex Council. www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/cost-of-living-support
- **Debt Advice:** Free help from **StepChange:** **0800 138 111** or **Money Helper:** **0800 011 3797**

7. Work & Education

- **Careers East Sussex:** Free skills and job support. www.careerseastsussex.co.uk
- **Sussex Recovery College:** Free courses on mental health and recovery. www.sussexrecoverycollege.org.uk



National Hoarding Awareness Week

starts on 11th May and aims to help everyone understand what hoarding is, share the facts, and encourage more people and services to work together to support those who need help. If you are worried about hoarding in your home or someone you care about, please speak to your local Housing Officer. Keep an eye on our website for updates about this campaign!

Support can be found here:

www.hoardingawarenessweek.org.uk

Karen Stewart

Growing Community Roots

Tenant Profile

Karen Stewart has been a driving force for tenant involvement and community-led projects across Eastbourne.

As the former Co-Chair of LET (Listening to Eastbourne Tenants) and a member of Eastbourne Resident's Voice, she played a key role in helping tenants navigate the move from the former Eastbourne Homes board to the current in-house structure at Eastbourne Borough Council. Her strong commitment to representation has also helped set the foundations for new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training for involved residents.

Karen's passion for community action extends far beyond tenant panels. She is a founding Director of the Eastbourne Food Partnership CIC, created in 2019 to promote healthier, more sustainable food for local people. More than a decade ago, she helped establish Eastbourne's first community garden, transforming an unused patch of land into a vibrant green space with compost bays, raised beds, fruit and nut trees, and even the Eastbourne Pippin, a locally grafted apple tree that has become a symbol of local growing.

Through her work with Edible Eastbourne, Karen has supported funding bids that have brought fruit trees and edible planting into parks and shared spaces across the town. These areas offer herbs, berries and other produce for residents to pick, helping to nurture wellbeing and build a sense of shared ownership. Having found her own garden to be a lifeline during difficult times, Karen continues to champion more community growing as a way to support mental health and connection.

Inspired by the Incredible Edible movement, she regularly attends Right to Grow webinars and encourages Eastbourne to learn from towns like Todmorden, where everyday public spaces have been transformed into edible landscapes. Karen believes that when communities grow food together, they grow stronger too.

In her words: ***"Plant a tree and the rest will follow."***



Karen's Top Tips for **reducing food waste** and **saving money**



- Line salad or vegetable bags with tissue paper or blue roll to absorb moisture and extend freshness.
- Store broccoli, spinach, or carrots in a jug of water to keep them crisp.
- Freeze thick-stemmed greens like kale or cabbage without blanching – perfect for cooking.
- Pick fruit from bushes daily and freeze for use in desserts or breakfasts.
- Browse charity shops for vintage cookbooks at bargain prices.
- Teach children how to safely prepare fruit and veg – an invaluable life skill.

Joint Allocations Policy

Eastbourne Borough Council and Lewes District Council have created a new joint Housing Allocations Policy. Its aim is to make the process of applying for a council home clearer, fairer and easier to understand for people in both areas.

We know there are far more people who need social housing than there are homes available. Because of this, it's important that the system is honest about the pressures we face, and that it treats everyone with respect.

We have replaced the old bidding system with a new 'Property Match' approach. This means applicants no longer need to bid for homes. Instead, the councils will directly match available properties to people based on:

- **How urgent their housing need is**
- **How long they've been on the register**
- **The size of home they need**
- **Their preferred area**

This helps make sure that homes go first to the people who need them most, following the law, and makes the whole process simpler and more transparent.

We want to thank all residents, tenants, council staff and partner organisations who helped shape this new policy. This is not just about how we allocate homes – it's also about offering honest advice, treating people with dignity, and supporting our communities across both districts.

“This new policy makes our housing system clearer and fairer. It shows our commitment to supporting people with honesty and compassion.”

Cllr Peter Diplock

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Eastbourne Borough Council

“Working together means we can give residents in both districts a better, more consistent service. This policy helps us support those who need housing the most, while treating everyone with respect.”

Cllr Mark Slater *Cabinet Member for Housing*
Lewes District Council

Tenants Insurance

Many people avoid getting home contents insurance because they worry it's too expensive, too complicated, or won't cover what they need. Some also think the landlord already covers their belongings.

Here's how our Tenants Contents Insurance helps:

“I can't afford it.”

Our insurance is designed to be affordable, with simple instalments and no interest. All tenants pay the same rates.

“It's too complicated.”

Applying is quick and easy. You only need basic details and there's no credit check.

HOMES FIRST
Insurance

Busting the Myths

“Claims take ages.”

We make claiming simple and aim to pay out as quickly as possible.

“Premiums go up if I claim.”

Your premium stays the same as other tenants, even if you've claimed.

“My landlord covers my belongings.”

We insure the building, not your personal items. Contents insurance protects your valuables.

The policy also covers items in sheds, garages, and gardens, plus lost keys, personal liability, and optional cover for belongings you take outside the home.

For more information or to get insured, visit Tenants contents insurance - www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/TCI

What we do and how to get in touch

The teams...

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.

HOMES FIRST

Homes First is proud to support our communities by providing a wide range of housing services for both councils. We help people find homes, manage their tenancies, access repairs, and get support if they are facing homelessness, while also delivering important statutory and strategic housing duties.

Property Services look after the council's housing stock, including day to day and emergency repairs, planned maintenance, stock condition checks, aids and adaptations, health and safety compliance, and leasehold management.

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.

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 grounds maintenance contractors to maintain these areas to prescribed standards.

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.

How to contact us



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 ASB.

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) or **01323 410000** (Eastbourne).

Did you know...?

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

Visit our offices

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 Monday to Friday at:

- **6 High Street, Lewes, BN7 2AD (9am to 5pm)**
- **1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4TW (10am to 2pm)**

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 **Karlee Holt** (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