

# Housing Strategy 2025-2028

This Housing Strategy sets out Dartford Borough Council's plans on how we intend to deliver our Housing Service to residents over the next three years.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our new Housing Strategy for 2025-2028 sets out the Council's Housing Service commitment to provide genuinely affordable homes for our residents and communities in Dartford and ensure that our homes in the borough are safe, secure places to live.

This Housing Strategy sets out our plans on how we intend to contribute to the delivery of housing services to residents in Dartford over the next three years. An action plan is contained within the Strategy which includes the key priorities we want to deliver on over the course of the Strategy period.

We believe that everyone should have access to safe, affordable housing, but also recognise the challenges in place that make this difficult. Housing is in short supply across the country, and rents in the south can be particularly high. We are committed to providing or enabling affordable homes for local people where possible, tackling challenges and delivering as best as possible in the face of competition for land and rapid increases in construction costs.

Although we are a relatively small borough, we have built or acquired 142 homes for affordable rent and have ongoing projects to provide more affordable housing in the borough through new build and acquisition.

The provision of affordable housing will also be delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders in the area. This will include other housing providers and property developers. Our newly adopted [Local Plan](#) sets out our plans for increasing overall housing delivery in the borough and provides a new and ambitious affordable housing target on development sites with an emphasis on housing for affordable or social rent.

### Strategic Housing Priorities

We have identified a number of key priorities for the Housing Strategy:

- Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes across the borough
- Relieve homelessness and end rough sleeping
- Deliver the outcomes of the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer and economic standards
- Improve housing conditions in the private rented sector and reduce the number of empty homes
- Provide a high quality housing service and ensure our homes are well maintained
- Engage with and listen to our tenants and to take their views into account when developing new housing services and policies.
- Engage meaningfully with our tenants and improve communication.

Our action plan at Appendix 1 sets out how we intend to deliver on each of the key priorities.

## Our Corporate Vision for Dartford

This Housing Strategy will be delivered in line with our Corporate Plan objectives. The [Corporate Plan 2024-2027](#) sets out the Council's priorities for the next three years. The plan is divided into a number of themes, each containing several objectives and key actions the Council want to achieve. For Housing, some of the key ambitions within the plan include providing more of our own housing stock, influencing the condition of homes in the private rented sector and driving up the fairness and transparency of service charges levied by management companies on new private estates. The Plan strives to make a difference and help as many people as possible, but in particular will prioritise the housing need of established Dartford families and their children.

## **2. DARTFORD'S PROFILE**

The borough of Dartford is situated in North West Kent. It borders Greater London, with Essex located north of the county across the River Thames. There are around 120,700 residents in the borough as of mid-2023.<sup>1</sup> In the 2021 Census, Dartford had the largest population increase in the South East and saw the second largest percentage growth population in England. Of the total population, 22.3% are aged under 15, 63.9% are aged 16-64, and 13.7% are aged 65 and over.<sup>2</sup>

Dartford has excellent transport links via both the road and rail networks within the borough, where residents are able to benefit from the high speed rail service at Ebbsfleet International rail station, as well as being able to easily access both the M25 and A2. The borough has also been long identified as part of the Thames Estuary growth area.

The Dartford borough incorporates part of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) which was set up by the Government in 2015 to deliver up to 15,000 homes and oversee the creation of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Garden City in north Kent. The EDC covers land in both Dartford and neighbouring Gravesham.

The borough is divided into 20 wards, with the number of dwellings being approximately 49,199 as of 31 March 2023.<sup>3</sup>

### **House Prices in Dartford**

The average house price in Dartford is £349,662 as of February 2025. The average price of a detached house is £692,449, a semi-detached house is £421,447, a terraced house is £339,312 and a flat or maisonette is £218,352.<sup>4</sup> Chart 1 demonstrates a visual representation of average house price changes since 2015.

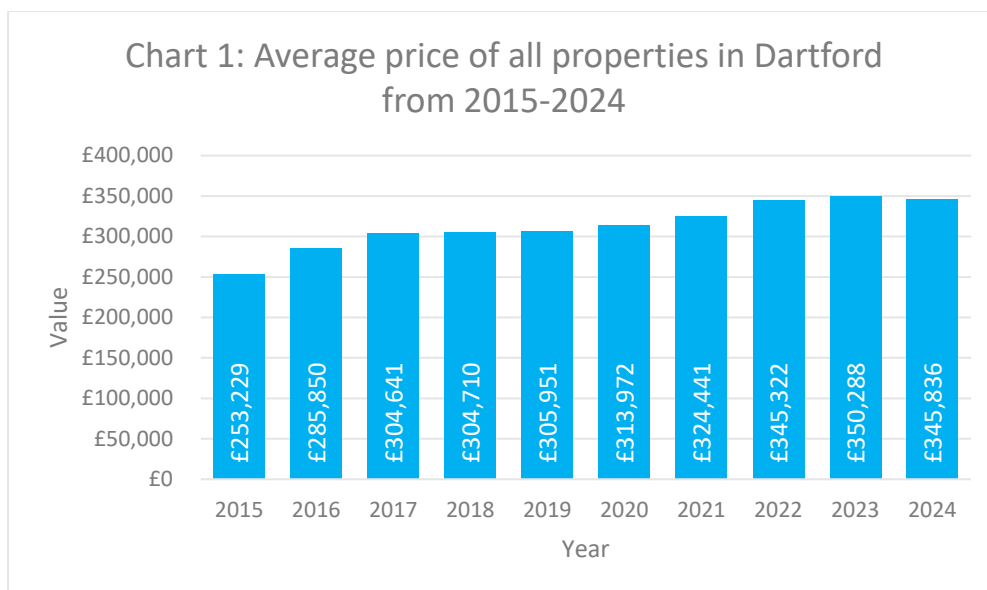
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<sup>1</sup> Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2023 – ONS – cited in 2023 Mid-year population estimates: Total population in Kent – Kent Analytics - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/population-and-census#tab-1>

<sup>2</sup> How the population changed in Dartford: Census 2021 – ONS - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000107/>

<sup>3</sup> DLUHC housing data, as cited in Housing stock in Kent – Kent Analytics - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/Land-and-property#tab-3>

<sup>4</sup> House Price Statistics – Land Registry - <https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/>



In March 2025 private rents rose to an average of £1,497 a month, which was an annual increase of 9.0% from the previous year. The average price paid by first-time buyers was £306,000 in February 2025, and for homes bought with a mortgage the average house price was £352,000 in February 2025.<sup>5</sup>

### **Housing Tenure in Dartford**

According to the 2021 Census, 65.6% of households in Dartford own their house outright or with a mortgage or loan. 18.1% of households were privately renting and 13.8% were social/affordable rented households.<sup>6</sup>

Dartford Borough Council currently owns and manages 3,766 general needs properties and 441 housing scheme properties for older people as at January 2025. Our housing register shows that there were 1,462 applicants on the register as at January 2025. This figure is expected to increase year on year due to demand being higher than supply (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Housing Register need by bedroom size**

Priority Band	Bedroom Size					Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Band A	49	31	16	7	2	105
Band B	111	201	332	65	5	714
Band C	91	54	37	8	0	190
Band D	146	183	100	22	2	453
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1462</b>

The Council operates a housing banding system to determine who will be prioritised for housing in the borough and who will not be eligible. Full details on the housing bands can be found in our [Housing Allocations Policy](#).

<sup>5</sup> Housing prices in Dartford – ONS - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000107/>

<sup>6</sup> How life has changed in Dartford: Census 2021 – ONS  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000107/>

### 3. LEGISLATION AND POLICY

#### Legislation

Much of what we do in the Housing Service is guided by legislation. This Housing Strategy and its delivery is intended to be compatible with, but not limited to, the following key legislation.

- **Charter for Social Housing Residents (Social Housing White Paper) 2020**  
- Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017, which exposed a range of issues with social housing, the Government set out what they believe landlords should be focusing on when delivering services. The publication of both the Green Paper in 2018 and the Charter for Social Housing Residents (Social Housing White Paper) in 2020 highlighted several themes around how landlords should act. This included being transparent in how they are performing, empowering residents to have their voices heard and ensuring all residents are safe in their home.
- **Fire Safety Act 2021** - The Fire Safety Act which was introduced in 2021 amends the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and clarifies that the external walls, flat entrance doors and the structure of buildings are all covered by the Fire Safety Order and must be accounted for in fire risk assessments. The Fire Safety (England) Regulations which were introduced in 2022 seek to improve the safety of blocks of flats in ways which are practical, cost effective for individual leaseholders and proportionate to the risk of fire. The regulations implemented the majority of the recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry in its Phase 1 report.
- **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023** - This increased the regulation of social landlords and gives the Regulator of Social Housing enforcement powers such as the ability to impose unlimited fines and authorise emergency remedial action to remedy failures by a landlord. The Act also introduced new social housing consumer standards, which are set out in Section 9 of this Strategy.
- **Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023** - This allowed the Government to create new national standards for supported housing, make changes to how supported accommodation is regulated and gives local authorities the power to set up licensing schemes to tackle poor quality supported housing in their area.

The Government has also committed to introducing a **Renters' Rights Act** which will aim to reform the private rented sector and strengthen renters' rights. Proposals include repealing section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 which allows landlords to evict tenants quickly without having to give a reason. Several new measures will also be included, such as a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman to resolve tenant complaints, the introduction of the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law to the private rented sector, and the prohibition of landlords discriminating against tenants in receipt of benefits or with children when letting a property.

## Policies

Housing policies are developed by our Housing Policy and Development team. Our housing policies set out the approach to how we deliver our services and what customers can expect, whilst adhering to regulatory and legislative requirements and best practice. They also promote transparency to both internal and external stakeholders.

## Strategies

Our Housing Policy and Development team also develop housing strategies, which set out a medium or long term vision containing actions and targets which are required to achieve that vision.

All housing policies and strategies are available to view on the Council's [Housing Strategy and Policy webpage](#).

## **4. TACKLING HOMELESSNESS IN DARTFORD**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on local authorities around preventing and relieving homelessness, including to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to help more people recover and get back on their feet after being made homeless. The Council has always been committed to helping those who are homeless or at risk of being made homeless, and it continues to be a priority area.

Our Homelessness Review 2023 looked at data over four years from 2019-2020 to 2022-2023. In 2022-2023, initial homelessness assessments increased 20.4% from the previous year where assessments were lower in 2021-22 in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic that saw reductions in the number of assessments undertaken nationally.

The Council has a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless (the 'prevention duty'). Where a person is already homeless, the Council has a duty to take reasonable steps to help the person to secure accommodation (the 'relief duty'). The main reasons for homelessness for applicants owed a prevention duty are the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy, and family or friends no longer willing to accommodate. The main reasons for homelessness for applicants owed a relief duty are domestic abuse, and family or friends no longer willing to accommodate.

Our Housing Solutions team aim to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity and have a number of initiatives in place to prevent a person having to leave their existing home or to help them to access alternative accommodation. This includes providing discretionary payments to those in serious financial difficulty, and working with other agencies to provide a Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic abuse.

A rough sleeper count was carried out in November 2024, which found that 10 people were sleeping rough, an increase on the 2023 figure of 3. To continue to combat rough sleeping, we aim to have a 'never give up' approach to individuals who find it difficult to trust authority and who are reluctant to engage. We also take a trauma informed approach to people who are scared to move on and let them know that other agencies,

such as Porchlight and the Dartford Churches Homeless Project (New Avenues), will support them with their meetings with us.

Our [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029](#) sets out further how we will work to tackle homelessness and offer support to anyone affected by homelessness. The Strategy has been developed based on findings from the Homelessness Review and is underpinned by the following five strategic priorities:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Accommodation
- Support
- Rough sleeping
- Trauma informed approach

The Strategy builds on the good foundations already in place to tackle homelessness. It is our sixth Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and commits to strengthen our existing approach to prevent and relieve homelessness, and to focus our efforts on identifying new and innovative ways to respond to the challenges we are likely to face over the coming years.

The Strategy also recognises that delivering our priorities on homelessness and rough sleeping relies on strong and effective partnership working with other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Some of the key activities we do include:

- Housing Hub (a multi-agency approach to case management)
- Working with landlords and excluders (e.g. family or friends) to sustain accommodation
- Attending Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- Building close working relationships with agencies such as mental health support, drug and alcohol support, and adult social care.

The progress of delivering the Strategy action plan is reported on an annual basis to the Council's Housing Advisory Board. Monitoring and updating the Strategy is carried out by Council Officers and presented to the Board who will consider the progress and make any recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate. Some actions completed include:

- A weekly drop-in service where anyone can access our service to gain quick housing advice was established in February 2024.
- The Landlords Forum, which provides an opportunity for landlords to meet on a regular basis with the council, resumed in 2024. Meeting dates for 2025 have been confirmed.
- A mystery shopping exercise was completed in September 2024, and is to be repeated annually. Lessons learned from the exercise will be used to improve customer experience.



## Temporary accommodation

The Council has a statutory duty to provide interim accommodation for eligible, homeless households in priority need; as prescribed under housing legislation. Interim accommodation is provided whilst inquiries are made regarding the homeless application. Once the Council is satisfied that an applicant is homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless, a main housing duty is owed. This means the Council must provide temporary accommodation until the duty is ended.<sup>7</sup> Temporary accommodation will be provided until the applicant's housing can be suitably resolved by a final offer of accommodation, and the homelessness duties discharged.

The Council's [Temporary Accommodation Strategy](#) sets out our approach to procuring interim and temporary accommodation for those households that meet the criteria set out in legislation.

**Table 2: Number of households placed in temporary accommodation**

The number of households placed in short term temporary accommodation is shown in Table 2 below. The table is broken down by the number of households with dependent children, placed in and out of the borough.

Year	Total number of households placed in short term temporary accommodation	Total number of households with dependent children	Number of households placed within the borough	Number of households with dependent children	Number of households placed outside the borough	With dependent children
2021/2022	377	169	147	49	230	120
2022/2023	408	248	101	49	307	199
2023/2024	474	299	110	61	364	238

**Table 3: Number of households placed in leased accommodation**

Some of the temporary accommodation the Council provides is through privately leased properties (the Dartford Private Leasing Scheme or 'DPLS'). Table 3 below shows the number of households placed in DPLS accommodation, broken down by households with dependent children.

Year	Total number of households placed in DPLS accommodation	Total number of households with dependent children
2021/2022	360	227
2022/2023	309	202
2023/2024	260	165

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<sup>7</sup> Housing Act 1996 – Section 193 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/193>

## 5. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Our Private Sector Housing team work to improve housing conditions of private sector properties through grant assistance, enforcement action, education and advice. There are approximately 42,849 private sector dwellings in Dartford, making up 87.1% of housing stock in the borough, as of 2023.<sup>8</sup>

The properties covered include those which are owner occupied, privately rented and housing association owned properties. The team can also assist those living in single households and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). There are 69 HMOs on the Public Register of HMOs as of February 2025.

The team have a number of mandatory functions which are set by legislation. Following the Grenfell tragedy and introduction of new fire safety legislation, the team are looking at high rise blocks of flats above 11m+ and 18m+. New government guidance around damp and mould sets out how we should approach damp and mould complaints, and to have particular regard to high scoring Category 2 hazards in relation to damp and mould cases as well as Category 1. Any new legislative requirements which are introduced through legislation or secondary legislation such as the Renters' Rights Bill and the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 will be implemented by the team when it comes into effect.

In 2020, the Council commissioned consultants to carry out a Housing Stock Modelling Report to better understand the condition of the private rented stock in the area. Full survey information was achieved for the whole of the housing stock. The key findings of the report were:

- 2,908 dwellings in the private sector have Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This equated to 7% of private sector properties.
- 719 dwellings in the private rented sector have Category 1 HHSRS hazards, which equated to 7% of properties in the private rented sector. In comparison, only 25 (0.006%) of council owned properties have a Category 1 HHSRS hazard.
- 1,092 of all stock is in disrepair, with 3% of this overall figure being in the private rented sector.

### Private Sector Renewal

Housing conditions have a major impact upon the health and wellbeing of individuals, households and communities. Cold and damp, housing design and layout and hazardous internal structures or fittings are just some of the factors which may be detrimental to a resident's health.

Our [Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2022-2025](#) aims to address the need for housing renewal and explains how we intend to meet this need. It builds upon the work already

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<sup>8</sup> Housing stock in Kent – Kent Analytics - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/Land-and-property#tab-3>

carried out in the implementation of the previous renewal strategy, which was developed in 2009. The Strategy will be reviewed and updated in 2025.

The two key priorities for this Strategy are:

- To enable residents to live independently in safe and healthy homes
- To decrease the numbers of households who are in fuel poverty and/or suffering from 'excess cold' and improve the overall energy efficiency of the private sector stock in Dartford

Actions used to meet these objectives include:

- Elimination of Category 1 HHSRS hazards and reduction of disrepair
- Promotion of safe independent living for residents should they choose
- Offering loans and grants to assist with private sector renewal
- Taking enforcement action against landlords in the private rented sector to improve conditions
- Improving partnership working with private sector landlords

### Empty Homes

Empty properties have an adverse effect on the community, posing health and safety issues and potentially attracting anti-social behaviour. At a time where there is a housing shortage, empty homes represent a wasted resource.

There were a total of 932 vacant dwellings in the borough as of 2023. This figure includes all tenures, although the majority of empty homes are privately owned. Of the vacant dwellings, 267 are long-term vacant (empty for 6 months or more). There were also 245 properties classed as second homes.<sup>9</sup>

The Private Sector Housing Team work to return empty properties and derelict land back into productive use. In 2023-24, 35 empty properties were brought back into use by the Council. We use a number of methods to help bring empty properties back into use, as set out in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2022-2025. This includes:

- Ensuring the availability and effective use of information on empty homes
- Developing effective partnership working within the Council and with external partners
- Raising awareness of empty properties in Dartford
- Encouraging reuse through the supply of information, advice, and support to empty property owners
- Taking enforcement action where appropriate using the tools provided by relevant legislation, such as securing open empty properties against unauthorised access to using closing or demolition orders, forced sales and the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders
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<sup>9</sup> Housing stock in Kent – Kent Analytics - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/Land-and-property#tab-3>

## 6. TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

The Council takes a zero tolerance approach towards domestic abuse and violence and our Housing Service puts victims and survivors at the heart of its response to identify, support and protect against domestic abuse. [Our Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2027](#) sets out how exactly we will do this.

The four main priorities for the Strategy are:

- To protect victims from future harm and ensure the right support is available
- To work with local agencies to provide a co-ordinated response when supporting victims and survivors
- To ensure that Council Housing Service staff receive appropriate training, and to raise awareness of domestic abuse
- To achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation by 2026

The Strategy recognises the importance of working in partnership with various agencies to tackle domestic abuse. Some of the partnership working includes:

- Hosting a weekly One Stop Shop at Dartford Borough Council's Civic Centre which offers free advice, information and support from a range of agencies
- Attending Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings where agencies discuss high risk domestic abuse cases and together develop a safety plan for the victim or survivor and his or her children
- Being part of the North Kent Domestic Abuse Forum that brings together voluntary and statutory agencies with the aim of strengthening partnership working, information sharing and co-ordinated service provision in response to domestic abuse
- Working with Kent County Council (KCC) to ensure the availability of specialist support services such as refuge or temporary accommodation
- Leading a Dartford Homelessness Forum that enables partners to come together to tackle homelessness, including where homelessness is caused as a result of domestic abuse

The Council also gives priority to housing applicants who are/have fled domestic abuse in its Housing Allocations Policy.

## 7. MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEED

### **Affordable Housing**

Our Housing Service aims to maximise the supply of affordable housing as much as possible, and works with multiple partners in order to do so. We will actively pursue opportunities to increase our stock of affordable council housing through new builds and purchases, and will support new affordable housing for sale and rent with our housing association partners.

A range of tenures/housing products fall within the definition of affordable housing, these include:

- Affordable housing for rent, such as social rented and other rented housing
- Intermediate affordable housing, such as shared ownership and other forms of housing offered at a discount, for example First Homes.

For some households, for example, newly forming households needing help to enter the housing market, ownership based affordable housing tenures are likely to be an appropriate solution. However, for those with lower household incomes, there is an essential need for affordable rented housing. Our [Local Plan for 2024-2037](#) sets a headline target of 35% of all dwellings to be defined as affordable housing to meet the current national definition of affordable housing. In Central Dartford, a location which is an overriding priority for growth, the target of 20% applies due to factors such as competing/existing suitable land uses.

The Local Plan policy for the urban area requires that affordable housing should be sought at developments where 15 or more units are proposed. Following national policy, affordable housing in more rural areas including the Green Belt or south of the A2 will be sought at developments where 10 or more units are proposed. Affordable housing will also be provided on sites which are over half a hectare in size.

For the year 2022/23, Dartford delivered 738 additional residential dwellings. Of those, 106 were provided as affordable homes.

### **Housing Development**

In the Local Plan, the Council is keen to deliver a wide range of residential development, particularly on larger sites. Genuine variety in the type of new accommodation is a requirement of the borough's development strategy. Dartford's policy framework includes several measures for the provision of high quality dwellings of sufficient size and type, appropriate to local needs. Developments should also aim to provide a good mix of houses and flats for families and individuals. The majority of dwellings in a new development should feature two or more bedrooms.

Certain types of specialist accommodation should also be considered and provided. This includes retirement living schemes, age restricted dwellings and extra care housing. The provision of older persons and nursing/residential care home spaces is supported within larger developments. Standalone specialist housing developments may also be built where there is need for the type and mix of accommodation proposed, and they are sustainably located. The [Dartford and Ebbsfleet Housing Needs Assessment](#) 2019 indicated a need for nearly 600 units of specialist accommodation and an additional 359 Registered Care spaces in nursing and residential care homes over the period April 2019 to March 2036.

The provision of accessible and adaptable dwellings within new developments is expected to create homes which are step free and therefore accessible to most people. Some dwellings in large developments should also be provided which meet wheelchair user standards. Provision of more accessible and adaptable dwellings will particularly benefit those with reduced mobility and enable more residents to stay in their homes for longer as their needs change.

The Government is also promoting self-build and custom-build dwellings as part of providing a greater volume, mix and range of new housing products. The Council is required to keep a Self-Build register which lists those who are seeking plots for self-build housing in the borough. This has been divided into two parts, with those in part 1 having an identified local connection to Dartford and all other applicants joining part 2.

### Dartford & Ebbsfleet Housing Needs Assessment

The [Dartford & Ebbsfleet Housing Needs Assessment](#) forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. It was produced by independent consultants HDH Planning & Development Ltd in 2019 to provide the Council with an assessment of the needs for different sizes, types and tenures of residential development. An updated version has since been produced in 2021.

Some of the key areas the assessment examines includes:

- The geographic context in which the local housing market operates
- The derivation of housing need in Dartford
- The cost of housing in Dartford
- The housing requirement of particular groups of the population

The assessment also identifies the annual affordable housing need in Dartford, which is 382 affordable homes per year.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expects strategic policy-making authorities to follow the standard method for assessing local housing need. The standard method uses a formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for.<sup>10</sup> The NPPF also expect an assessment of affordable need to be carried out, as well as to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.

### Right to Buy

The Right to Buy scheme allows eligible council tenants to buy their home at a price lower than the full market value. The scheme applies to tenants who hold secure tenancies and the discount is based on a number of factors, including the type of property (a flat or house), the value of the home and how long someone has been a tenant.

Tenants can currently apply to buy their home at a discount if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

- It is their only or main home
- It is self-contained
- They are a secure tenant
- They have spent at least 3 years as a council tenant in the borough.

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<sup>10</sup> Housing and economic needs assessment – GOV.UK - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

It should be noted that Right to Buy legislation may change.

## **8. SAFE AND SECURE HOMES**

### Housing Repairs and Maintenance

The Council's Housing Repairs team assists tenants and leaseholders with queries about housing repairs and arrange for contractors to carry out those repairs that are the responsibility of the Council.

Our [Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#) sets out the Council's approach to the housing repairs and maintenance services which is provided to Council tenants and leaseholders. The Policy was revised in 2024 to ensure it remains up-to-date and compliant with any new legislation, regulation and best practice.

### Decent Homes

The Decent Homes Standard sets out the criteria that Council homes are required to meet. The definition of what a decent home is was updated in 2006 to reflect the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). A decent home must meet the following criteria:

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing. A home which contains one or more hazards assessed as serious (Category 1) under the HHSRS will fail to meet this standard.
- The key building components and non-key building components need to be in a reasonable state of repair.
- It must have reasonably modern facilities and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

The Council will be commencing a full stock condition survey in 2025 which will help to better understand and identify any repair needs or health and safety issues. It will also ensure the stock data is up-to-date and allow planning for any required future works to be undertaken.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents published in 2020 committed to review the Decent Homes Standard. The Standard will also be extended to cover the private rented sector, in addition to social housing.

### Fire Safety

We are committed to ensuring we are compliant with the requirements as set out in the relevant legislation and regulation, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

A pro-active regime of fire risk assessments (FRA) is undertaken in council properties as well as the management of all fire protection and safety systems and equipment. The Council also focuses on fire prevention measures which are designed to eliminate or reduce fire hazards in order to provide a safe environment and reduce both the



likelihood and impact of a fire should one occur. The Council has developed a [Fire Safety Policy](#) which sets out how we will manage fire safety risk in its buildings and communal areas.

### Damp and Mould

The [Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy](#) sets out how the Council will address and respond to reports of damp, mould and condensation in Council properties. We take all reports of damp and mould seriously and have preventative measures in place, ensuring all relevant guidance is followed.

This includes the introduction of Awaab's Law through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 which requires landlords to fix reported health and safety hazards within a strict timeframe, such as taking immediate action on dangerous damp and mould in a tenant's home or rehousing tenants where a home cannot be made safe. At the time of writing, the details and the timeframe introduced as part of Awaab's Law are yet to be set.

### Asbestos

The Council's asbestos responsibilities include ensuring our asbestos register is updated as necessary, monitoring the condition of known or suspected asbestos containing materials (ACMs) and labelling any ACMs and ensuring the maintenance of these labels. We will also instruct contractors to undertake removal works where asbestos is likely to be disturbed.

The [Asbestos Management Policy and Plan](#) sets out how the Council will manage asbestos in its housing stock and sites which fall under the responsibility of the Housing Service. The Council carries out asbestos management surveys on all of its residential housing stock and has completed surveys to all of the communal and common areas of low rise properties.

## **9. IMPROVING HOMES AND SERVICES**

### Net Zero

The Council has set its own target of reaching Net Zero by 2030. 'Net Zero' refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. Net Zero is reached when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away.

The [Net Zero Strategy](#) identifies key targets for housing which include establishing a decarbonisation path for our existing housing stock, ensuring all Council led housing development is built to low carbon standards and working with partners to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the private sector.

### **Regulation of Housing Services**

#### The role of the Regulator of Social Housing

The Regulator of Social Housing was established in 2018 and act as the national regulator for landlord services, specifically registered providers of social housing. The



Regulator sets standards which state outcomes that landlords must deliver on, and holds landlords to account where they fail to deliver on these outcomes. The overall goal is to provide protection for tenant's homes and services and to achieve better outcomes for tenants.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has given the Regulator of Social Housing more powers to intervene where landlords are failing. The Regulator now has a proactive role where they actively seek assurance from landlords that their standards are being met through means such as data returns and a programme of inspections. They also check how landlords are performing under the tenant satisfaction measures.

The regulatory standards set by the Regulator for landlords to meet are split into two categories: economic and consumer standards. They set out what landlords must do to provide quality homes and services to residents. As of April 2024, there are four new consumer standards which cover the promises made in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.

#### Consumer standards

<b>Standard – area:</b>	<b>What the standard covers:</b>
<b>Neighbourhood and Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety of shared spaces</li> <li>• Local cooperation</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents</li> <li>• Domestic abuse</li> </ul>
<b>Safety and Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stock quality</li> <li>• Decency</li> <li>• Health and safety</li> <li>• Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements</li> <li>• Adaptations</li> </ul>
<b>Tenancy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocations and lettings</li> <li>• Tenancy sustainment and evictions</li> <li>• Tenure</li> <li>• Mutual exchange</li> </ul>
<b>Transparency, Influence and Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairness and respect</li> <li>• Diverse needs</li> <li>• Engagement with tenants</li> <li>• Information about landlord services</li> <li>• Performance information</li> <li>• Complaints</li> </ul>

#### Economic standards

<b>Standard – area:</b>	<b>What the standard covers:</b>
<b>Rent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rents should be set in accordance with Government policy</li> </ul>

*The Regulator of Social Housing set three economic standards, but only the Rent Standard applies to local authorities.*

The Regulator is also planning to introduce a further consumer standard called the Competence and Conduct Standard. This standard will require social housing

landlords to ensure their staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience and that they demonstrate the right behaviours to deliver a good service to tenants. It will also require senior managers and executives working in the social housing sector to acquire required qualifications in housing management.

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Regulator of Social Housing introduced tenant satisfaction measures in April 2023 and placed a requirement on all registered providers of social housing to collect and publish tenant satisfaction measures data annually. The measures allow for tenants to see how well their landlord is performing, as well as give landlords insight about where improvements can be made to their service.

There are 22 tenant satisfaction measures of which some measures come from management information we hold about our services, and some which come from what residents tell us through perception surveys.

The tenant satisfaction measures cover six areas:

- Overall satisfaction
- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Effective handling of complaints
- Responsible neighbourhood management

So far we have completed 2 tenant perception surveys which were carried out for 6 weeks from July to September in both 2023-24 and 2024-25. We also completed a pilot survey in 2022-23 prior to the formal introduction of the measures to learn as much as possible about undertaking the survey before the tenant satisfaction measures were officially introduced.

The [results of the survey](#) from 2023-24 highlighted both areas of good performance, as well as areas where satisfaction could be improved. We have reviewed the results of the survey to identify where our performance could be improved, particularly in areas where tenants expressed their dissatisfaction. We have also developed an improvement plan consisting of key actions to complete to support our improvement work, which will be updated following learning from the 2024-25 survey results.

### The role of the Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is set up by law to look at complaints about registered providers of social housing. They resolve disputes involving tenants and landlords, and can investigate a complaint once it has exhausted the landlords' complaints process. The [Corporate Complaints Policy](#) set out how the Council handles complaints.

The Housing Ombudsman has a Complaint Handling Code that all social housing landlords must follow. It became statutory in April 2024 and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Ombudsman to ensure that all landlords

meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling. The Code sets out good practice to help landlords respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

Landlords are required to produce an annual [complaint performance and service improvement report](#), which must include a self-assessment against the Code and submit this annually to the Ombudsman.

There is also a requirement under the Complaint Handling Code to have a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The MRC is responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.

The MRC for the Council is the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing (and Chair of the Housing Advisory Board). To support the MRC in the role, a housing complaints panel is planned to be set up to scrutinise complaint handling performance and ensure there is improvement to services from learning from complaints.

## **10. RESIDENT SAFETY**

### Community Safety

The [Dartford Community Safety Strategy for 2022-2025](#) provides the direction that the Dartford Community Safety Partnership (DCSP) intends to take to reduce crime and disorder over the three year plan period. The DCSP was set up in 2020 after the dissolution of the long established Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership. Although the DCSP has continued to maintain its relationship with Gravesham in areas such as supporting victims of domestic abuse and tackling the 'cross border' criminals that operate within both our respective Town Centres.

The role of the DCSP is to bring key local agencies together to deliver multi-agency solutions to local problems by pooling resources and experience. It aims to prevent crime and disorder, the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and to reduce re-offending in the local area.

The DCSP is made up of a partnership of key agencies including:

- Kent Police
- Dartford Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service
- NHS Kent and Medway

### Anti-Social Behaviour

The Housing Service works closely with the Council's Community Safety Unit (CSU), Environmental Health Service (EHS) and the Environmental Enforcement Team in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour on estates. The [Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incident Policy](#) sets out the action we will take to tackle anti-social behaviour

(ASB). We also have a dedicated ASB team in Housing who focus on resolving ASB issues within our estates.

The Council's response to reports of ASB will be based upon what is considered proportionate and appropriate in all the circumstances. The Police will be notified of all cases involving violence and criminality and we will assist them where necessary. The CSU also hold Daily Briefings with multi-agency partners to raise issues of concern of ASB on a daily case-by-case basis.

The CSU lead on facilitating the Dartford Vulnerability and Contextual Safeguarding Panel which assists to address forms of ASB, whilst supporting referring agencies by taking a multi-agency response to support those affected by ASB who are vulnerable.

Any complex cases will be referred by our Tenancy Services team to the Complex Case Panel, a joint panel between the Tenancy Services and Housing Solutions teams that meets monthly to put in place plans for tenants where ASB may be a factor in the case and there is a risk of homelessness due to possession proceedings.

## **11. HOUSING SCHEMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

Dartford offers a range of housing services for older people, including housing scheme accommodation where support is available to residents aged 60 and over to provide additional assistance with daily living tasks. The Council has 11 housing schemes for older people within the borough.

Kent County Council (KCC) also provide extra care housing for people aged 55 and over who require some care and support but would like to maintain their independence in their own home. There are 2 extra care housing schemes in Dartford. The Council is able to nominate eligible persons from the housing register to these properties. The schemes provide additional on-site facilities such as a restaurant and visiting hairdresser.

## **12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

The Council's [Equality and Diversity Framework](#) details the Council's commitment to achieve equality of opportunity in all it does and seeks to ensure that everyone can take a full part in the social, cultural and economic life of the borough. This is regardless of a person's protected characteristics which are set out in the Equality Act 2010, consisting of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council has also developed an Equality Action Plan which sets out the equality objectives that the Council aims to achieve.

The Council also carries out [customer access reviews](#) which are designed to examine how existing or new services or policies affect the protected characteristic groups. The Customer Access Reviews help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which is made up of the general duty and specific duties. The aims of the general duty are:

1. Putting an end to unlawful behaviour including discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.<sup>11</sup>

The Housing Service complete customer access reviews as part of the review process of any existing policy or strategy, or when a new policy or strategy is developed. They ensure that the services we provide are accessible to all and also ensure employees provide support to tenants as required.

### Vulnerable People

The Council has developed a [Vulnerable Adults Housing Policy](#) which sets out how vulnerable adults can access the Housing Service and how the service has adapted to meet the needs of vulnerable adults. It also sets out how vulnerable adults are identified and the types of support which are available.

The Council recognises that a person may be vulnerable as a result of a single problem or condition, or due to a combination of factors. Vulnerability can also occur at different points in a person's life and may be temporary or permanent.

Where it is believed that an adult with care and support needs or a child is at risk of harm due to abuse or neglect, a safeguarding referral will be made to Social Services to protect the adult or child from harm in accordance with the Council's [Safeguarding Policy](#).

### Care Leavers

The Council's [Care Leavers Policy](#) outlines the Council's commitment to support young people on their journey from care to independence. It also identifies the opportunities the Council can provide to empower care leavers to realise their potential and make constructive choices that will in turn help shape their future.

Every young person between 16 and 25 years of age that is in care or is a care leaver, will be provided with a Pathway Plan by Kent County Council. The Pathway Plan will be started by a Social Worker when the care leaver turns 16 and will set out their needs, views, future goals and what support they will receive.

All care leavers that are currently accommodated by their local authority in the Dartford area will be entitled to apply to join the housing register at the age of 18 years old. There are different kinds of housing with support and care leavers will have a say on where they wish to live once they have left care. Support and opportunities will also be offered to care leavers in other areas such as health, employment and financially.

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<sup>11</sup> The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – Equality and Human Rights Commission - <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-psed>

## Disability

It is difficult to measure the number of people with a disability as the definitions of disability vary and often depend on an individual's own perception on health as to whether the condition is disabling.

The definition of disability as set out in the Equality Act 2010 is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal activities.

The 2021 Census found that 15.9% of Dartford's population identified as being disabled. Of this, 6.6% of people's activities are limited a lot and 9.3% of people's activities are limited a little.<sup>12</sup>

Benefits data also gives an indication on the number of people who are disabled as it provides an accurate count of people claiming disability benefits and the age and sex of those claimants. There are three types of disability benefits which can be claimed. These are Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance (AA) and a Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

As of November 2023, there were 9,494 (8%) people claiming a disability benefit in Dartford. The number of claimants had increased by 944 on the previous year, an 11% change. Across Kent, the most common cause for claiming a disability benefit was a physical disability or health condition (61.4%), followed by claims for a mental health problem (22.9%) and then a learning difficulty (15.7%).<sup>13</sup>

## Housing Register Applicants

The Council gives reasonable preference to housing applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, which includes any grounds relating to a disability in line with the Housing Act 1996. The Council's [Housing Allocations Policy](#) places applicants with high medical or welfare needs in Band A which is the highest priority band. The Council will also assist any applicants who require support in joining the housing register. As of August 2024, our housing register shows there are 60 people waiting for adapted or adaptable properties. The Council will continue to seek the provision of adapted/adaptable properties on sites as part of the planning process.

## Aids and Adaptations

The Council provides an adaptations service for council tenants who are disabled, those living with a long term illness or in cases where a tenant requires an aid or adaptation to assist them in their day to day living. This may include instances where a tenant or immediate family member is neurodivergent, or for a tenant who is elderly or frail. The Council's [Aids and Adaptations Policy](#) sets out the process Council tenants should follow when requesting adaptations and the criteria by which adaptations requests are assessed.

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<sup>12</sup> How life has changed in Dartford: Census 2021 – ONS -

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000107>

<sup>13</sup> DWP benefits data, as cited in Disability in Kent – Kent Analytics - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/equality-and-diversity-data>



Disabled residents are also able to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which can be used towards the cost of adaptations works in their home. This assistance may be provided to homeowners, private tenants and those who live in a houseboat or caravan, as well as Council and housing association tenants. More information is set out in our [Disabled Facilities Grants Policy](#).

### Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The term 'gypsies and travellers' cover a range of groups with different histories, cultures and beliefs including Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers. The national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) defines gypsies and travellers as:

*'Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.'*<sup>14</sup>

Of the total population in Dartford, 0.44% identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the 2021 Census.<sup>15</sup>

The PPTS defines travelling showpeople as:

*'Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above'.*<sup>16</sup>

The Council owns and manages a site in Dartford, which is a public site in the borough, and has responsibility for the fair allocation of pitches with consideration given to the suitability of applicants. The site contains 12 pitches. There was (as of June 2019) also other provision, including: 16 privately authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites in the borough with 45 pitches and 1 travelling showpeople yard with 7 plots.

A [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#) (GTAA) was carried out in 2019 as part of the evidence for the preparation of the Local Plan. The GTAA aims to provide an assessment of current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation in the borough for the period 2019 to 2035. The GTAA identified that most of the need required is due to aging children who would need their own caravan.

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<sup>14</sup> Planning policy for traveller sites – Department for Communities and Local Government (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>

<sup>15</sup> Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations, England and Wales: Census 2021 – ONS - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/gypsioririshtravellerpopulationsenglandandwales/census2021>

<sup>16</sup> Planning policy for traveller sites – Department for Communities and Local Government (now Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>

Table 2 below shows the predicted need for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people split across the different periods to 2035. Between 2019 and 2023, the Council have approved 35 pitches. The Dartford Plan has allocated three sites in order to address the need for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people.

**Table 2: Dartford Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Findings<sup>17</sup>**

	2019-24	2024-29	2029-34	2035	Total
<b>Gypsies and Travellers</b>	55	13	13	2	83
<b>Travelling Showpeople</b>	1	0	0	0	1

### 13. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Resident involvement gives residents the opportunity to help shape and improve our housing services. It also enables the Council to share ideas with residents, giving residents the opportunity to influence the decisions we make and have their say.

One way residents can get involved is through the Dartford Tenant and Leaseholder Forum. This is a group made up of tenants and leaseholders living in the borough who share a common goal of ensuring the services delivered by the Council are accessible to all. The Forum works together to ensure the views and housing needs of residents are recognised and addressed by the Council, and that those needs and views are placed at the centre of housing services delivery. They also work in partnership with other forums and groups within the borough to address the specific housing needs of certain groups, e.g. supported housing tenants and leaseholders.

Members of the Forum also take on the role of a resident representative. The resident representatives:

- Hold portfolio roles where they attend meetings with officers (and contractors where appropriate) and contribute to the work of the service, for example, repairs and maintenance contract, heating contract, grounds maintenance contract, estate cleaning contract, anti-social behaviour and allocations
- Are part of the procurement process in awarding contracts
- Assist in assessing the performance and standards of the estate cleaning and grounds maintenance service providers
- Act as a communication conduit for issues raised by individual tenants and leaseholders
- Attend local community events
- Encourage other tenants and leaseholders to participate in what is happening in the local community.

<sup>17</sup> Dartford Borough Council: The Dartford Plan - <https://www.dartford.gov.uk/policy-1/dartford-plan-2024/1>



Housing Services also involve residents in many other ways, such as through customer satisfaction surveys and by consulting with tenants on all our new or majorly revised policies and strategies. We also keep tenants and leaseholders informed through our newsletter 'The Link'.

We also hold quarterly meetings with Councillors, tenants, and leaseholders through our Housing Advisory Board. The Housing Advisory Board was set up in 2022 to enable recommendations from tenants, leaseholders, Councillors and Council Officers to be taken forward on housing policies and other relevant housing matters. The Board is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and vice chaired by the Chair of the Dartford Tenants and Leaseholders Forum.

### Resident Engagement team

The team is made up of two full time officers whose roles include engaging with and supporting tenants. . The team assists the Council to better connect with our community. Going forward, the team will focus on building relationships and trust and creating an open dialogue that encourages residents to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns. The team will also manage customer complaints and work with residents to increase tenant satisfaction levels.

### Initiatives for direct engagement

To strengthen our outreach and ensure that resident voices are actively involved in decision-making processes, we will implement several key initiatives:

- **Surgeries:** We will host regular resident surgeries, providing an informal platform for residents to meet with the team, discuss concerns, and offer feedback. These surgeries will rotate through various estates to ensure accessibility for all community members.
- **Updates:** We will enhance our communication with residents by providing regular updates through various channels.
- **Estate inspections and presence:** There will be an increase in estate inspections and walk-arounds, allowing residents to join council representatives in assessing the condition of estates. This hands-on approach will empower residents to address issues directly and contribute to a collaborative effort in maintaining and improving their environment.

### Review of engagement and communication methods

To enhance resident engagement, we will conduct a comprehensive review of our current engagement and communication methods. This evaluation will focus on identifying areas for improvement, ensuring that our strategies are effective, inclusive, and tailored to meet the diverse needs of our community. Feedback will be instrumental in shaping these methods.

### Focus on feedback and accountability

A cornerstone of our resident engagement strategy will be the commitment to actively include feedback from both leaseholders and tenants. We believe that resident feedback is vital for holding us accountable in our service delivery. To foster a culture of transparency, we will implement initiatives that allow residents to voice their opinions, share experiences, and suggest improvements. Regular feedback mechanisms will be established, accompanied by clear channels for accountability, ensuring that we respond effectively to resident concerns and aspirations.

By prioritising resident engagement and implementing these initiatives, we aim to create a housing environment that reflects the needs and desires of our community. Through an expanded team, direct engagement initiatives, strategic reviews, and a focus on feedback, we are committed to building a stronger, more connected relationship between residents and the council. Together, we will work towards a cohesive and thriving community that empowers every resident to play an active role in shaping their living conditions.

Our [Tenants and Leaseholders Engagement Strategy 2023-2026](#) sets out further how tenants and leaseholders can get involved and the Council's responsibilities in delivering meaningful engagement.

## **14. PARTNERSHIPS**

We work with various partners to deliver our housing service, many which have been identified throughout the Strategy in areas such as homelessness, domestic abuse and community safety. We are fully committed to developing partnerships and recognise the strength and value of effective joint working arrangements to delivering services.

Some of the additional joint working and partnership groups we are part of are set out in this section.

### Kent Housing Group

The Kent Housing Group (KHG) is a forum for social housing organisations in Kent. The group encourages sharing best practice and knowledge, and identifying areas for joint working in order to deliver better housing services. KHG has a number of sub groups which cover more specific areas within housing, such as asset management, tenancy management and private sector housing. Regular sub group meetings are held which Council Officers will attend. The sub groups all support the vision and objectives of KHG, including the implementation of the [Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-2025](#) to which the Kent Housing Group is currently in the process of refreshing.

### Housing Strategy and Enabling Group

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Group is one of the sub groups to the Kent Housing Group. It is formed of all Kent local authorities and some housing associations. The aim of the group is to share best practice in terms of strategy development and service delivery, and aims to develop solutions to identify housing need and assist in the delivery of new affordable housing.

### North Kent Housing Partnership

The North Kent Housing Partnership is formed of both housing associations and local authorities which are located in the northern part of the county. The aim of the partnership is to enable the provision of affordable housing in the borough. The group provides a framework for improved coordination of funding programmes and planning of housing developments between the Council, Homes England and housing association partners.

### Kent Homechoice

The Kent Homechoice choice-based letting scheme allows those who want to move into Council or housing association social housing to bid on properties within the county. Those who are eligible to join are required to complete an online application form on the Kent Homechoice website. This joint working initiative delivers benefits to our residents and tenants when seeking access to social housing by simplifying the process, providing consistency and aiding mobility across Kent.

### Dartford & Gravesham Home Improvement Agency

The Dartford and Gravesham Home Improvement Agency (HIA) aims to assist owner occupiers or private tenants who are over 60 years of age, disabled or on low incomes to repair, improve and/or adapt their homes. The aim is to keep homes suitable to live in and ensure residents are able to continue to live independently.

## **15. EXTERNAL FUNDING**

### Funding Opportunities

We seek external funding where possible so we can provide additional support to residents and fund additional projects or initiatives.

Some of the funding we have received includes the Household Support Fund 6 (HSF) which aims to support a wide range of low income households, and is not limited to those on benefits. The funding covers a range of schemes which can be given to tenants providing they meet the eligibility requirements. This includes food vouchers, energy vouchers to purchase energy efficient items to reduce bills and funding for the cost of a new carpet in one room per household.

Some of the other funding we have received includes:

- Discretionary Housing Payment – This funding can help people with housing costs, including those affected by the benefit cap and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (now the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund) – This fund aimed to upgrade a significant amount of social housing stock currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C up to that standard.
- Homelessness Prevention Grant – This is provided to local councils to support them to deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness.

- Rough Sleeping Initiative – This provides local councils with long-term funding to support those sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping.

## **16. MONITORING OUR STRATEGY**

This Strategy will be implemented over a three year period. The action plan will be monitored internally on a regular basis to ensure progress is being tracked. Updates to the action plan will be provided where necessary. Updates to the Strategy may also be provided to address any legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues which may arise.

<b>APPENDIX 1:</b>
<b>ACTION PLAN: STRATEGIC HOUSING PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS</b>

Priority	Action	Main Partners
<b>Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes across the borough</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide 35% affordable housing on all private urban development sites of over 15 units (10+ units where non urban) or over half a hectare, or 20% in Central Dartford, applied in compliance with the Local Plan, and with exceptions as set out.</li> <li>• Ensure that a genuine variety and sustainable mix of housing is provided, particularly on larger development sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developers, housing associations, Planning</li> <li>• Developers, housing associations, Planning</li> </ul>
<b>Relieve homelessness and end rough sleeping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 Action Plan.</li> <li>• Implement the Domestic Abuse Housing Strategy 2024-2027 Action Plan.</li> <li>• Review the Temporary Accommodation Strategy.</li> <li>• Undertake a review of the Sanctuary Scheme referral Procedure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dartford Homelessness Forum</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> </ul>
<b>Deliver the outcomes of the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer and economic standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and publish annual tenant satisfaction measures</li> <li>• Publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report</li> <li>• Set up a housing complaints panel to scrutinise complaint handling performance.</li> <li>• Prepare for the introduction of the Competence and Conduct Standard</li> <li>• Prepare for inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> </ul>

<b>Improve housing conditions in the</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.</li> <li>• Prepare for the implementation of the Renters Rights Bill.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private sector landlords, Home Improvement Agency, other local authorities</li> <li>• Internal, other local authorities</li> </ul>
<b>Provide a high quality housing service and ensure our homes are well maintained</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a full stock condition survey in 2025, and ensure adaptations form part of the stock condition survey.</li> <li>• Attain 100% decency in line with the Decent Homes Standard.</li> <li>• Develop a revised programme of planned works to comply with the new Decent Homes Standard once it is introduced.</li> <li>• Implement and comply with Awaab's Law once the new requirements have been introduced in secondary legislation.</li> <li>• Set up mechanisms to monitor the compliance with Awaab's Law and the time limits to address hazards which will be introduced through the legislation.</li> <li>• Complete the development of the Housing Revenue Account Housing Statutory Maintenance Compliance Policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal, surveying contractor</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> <li>• Internal</li> </ul>
<b>Engage with and listen to our tenants and to take their views into account when developing new housing services and policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with tenants in the development stages of new services, policies and strategies.</li> <li>• Consult with tenants when major changes to a policy or strategy are being proposed.</li> <li>• Set up mechanisms to feedback to tenants the outcome of consultations and satisfaction survey work.</li> <li>• Complete the review and consultation on a revised Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Support Pack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> </ul>
<b>Engage meaningfully with our tenants and improve communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct the yearly tenant satisfaction measures survey and implement the feedback received.</li> <li>• Learn from each tenant satisfaction measures survey to increase participation year on year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal, tenants, customer research agency</li> <li>• Internal, customer research agency</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage more tenants and leaseholders to become part of the DTLF.</li> <li>• Set up and host regular resident surgeries in various estates across the borough.</li> <li>• Provide regular updates to tenants via various communication channels.</li> <li>• Hold more frequent estate inspections and walk-arounds.</li> <li>• Complete a review of our current engagement and communication methods to enhance resident engagement.</li> <li>• Establish and put in place regular feedback mechanisms which allow residents to feedback to us and suggest improvements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> <li>• Internal, tenants</li> </ul>
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