



Regulator of
Social Housing

Medway Council 00LC

Regulatory Judgement

27 November 2024

Our Judgement

	Grade/Judgement	Change	Date of assessment
Consumer	C2 Our judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.	First grading	November 2024

Reason for publication

We are publishing a regulatory judgement for Medway Council following an inspection completed in November 2024.

This regulatory judgement confirms a consumer grading of C2. This is the first time we have issued a consumer grade in relation to this landlord.

Summary of the decision

From the evidence and assurance gained during the inspection, we have concluded that there are some weaknesses in Medway Council delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed, specifically in relation to outcomes

in our Safety and Quality Standard and Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. Based on this assessment, we have concluded a C2 grade for Medway Council.

How we reached our judgement

We carried out an inspection of Medway Council to assess how well Medway Council is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards, as part of our planned regulatory inspection programme. During the inspection we considered all four of the consumer standards: Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Safety and Quality Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

During the inspection we observed the Housing Revenue Account Governance Group meeting and a tenant scrutiny panel. We also met with tenants, officers and elected members including the leader of the council, and the portfolio holder for housing. We also reviewed a wide range of documents provided by Medway Council.

Our regulatory judgement is based on all of the information we obtained during the inspection as well as analysis of information received from Medway Council through our routine regulatory returns and other regulatory engagement activity.

Summary of findings

Consumer – C2 –November 2024

In relation to the Safety and Quality Standard, Medway Council provided assurance that it has appropriate systems in place to manage its health and safety responsibilities and to ensure the health and safety of its tenants in their homes and associated communal areas. Outcomes across the main areas of health and safety compliance are good, and performance is actively monitored by senior officers and councillors, although improvement is needed in the reporting and oversight of remedial actions. Medway has a proactive approach to identifying and responding to cases of damp and mould in its homes.

The Safety and Quality Standard also requires landlords to have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes at an individual property level based on a physical assessment of all homes and ensure that homes meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard. Medway Council has some gaps in the information it holds on the condition of its homes, as more than 45% of property records are not up to date. We saw evidence that work is underway to address this issue, with a clear programme in place to improve the information held by Medway Council.

Medway Council has reported that just over 8% of its homes are failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard. It has provided assurance that stock quality information is used to inform capital investment decisions to reduce non-decency levels. We will continue to engage with Medway Council while it takes action to ensure that it has an accurate and up to date understanding of the condition of its homes and reduces the number of non-decent homes.

The Safety and Quality Standard also requires landlords to provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible. We saw evidence that Medway Council's repairs and maintenance performance is generally in line with its targets, and it has plans to reduce a current repairs backlog. We will monitor this through our ongoing engagement. We saw evidence that tenants' views have informed the requirements in Medway Council's new repairs contracts.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard states that landlords must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing. Medway Council provided assurance that it provides prompt and appropriate action in response to anti-social behaviour and hate incidents reported, working in partnership with relevant organisations.

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard includes the requirement for landlords to provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account. It also requires landlords to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly. Medway Council demonstrated that it provides a range of relevant and accessible information to tenants, including about its performance in delivering landlord services. Through our inspection, we found that there are meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise Medway Council's strategies, policies and services. Whilst some areas of tenant engagement are still being developed, Medway Council is committed to building on its existing arrangements to support tenants in influencing and scrutinising its services. We observed a positive culture amongst officers, and a commitment to providing good services for tenants.

Through our inspection we identified that action is needed to ensure that Medway Council has comprehensive information about the diverse needs of its tenants to better adapt and tailor its services to their individual needs and to ensure its housing and landlord services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants. Medway Council recognises that this is an area for improvement and has plans to extend the collection of information it holds about the diverse needs of its tenants.

We saw evidence that complaints are handled effectively and promptly addressed, and Medway Council provides accessible information to tenants about its complaints policy and its complaints handling process. Medway Council acknowledges that it needs to improve the information it shares with tenants about lessons learnt and improvements made as a result of complaints handling, and we will engage with Medway Council as it makes improvements in these areas.

In relation to the Tenancy Standard, we saw evidence that Medway Council was offering tenancies or terms of occupation that are compatible with the purpose of its accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of its housing stock.

Medway Council demonstrated through the inspection that it understands where it needs to make improvements, and we have assurance that it is addressing the areas of weakness identified.

Background to the judgement

About the landlord

Medway Council owns and manages around 3,000 social housing homes in Kent. The majority of homes are general needs with some sheltered housing.

Our role and regulatory approach

We regulate for a viable, efficient, and well governed social housing sector able to deliver quality homes and services for current and future tenants.

We regulate at the landlord level to drive improvement in how landlords operate. By landlord we mean a registered provider of social housing. These can either be local authorities, or private registered providers (other organisations registered with us such as non-profit housing associations, co-operatives, or profit-making organisations).

We set standards which state outcomes that landlords must deliver. The outcomes of our standards include both the required outcomes and specific expectations we set. Where we find there are significant failures in landlords which we consider to be material to the landlord's delivery of those outcomes, we hold them to account. Ultimately this provides protection for tenants' homes and services and achieves better outcomes for current and future tenants. It also contributes to a sustainable sector which can attract strong investment.

We have a different role for regulating local authorities than for other landlords. This is because we have a narrower role for local authorities and the Governance and Financial Viability Standard, and Value for Money Standard do not apply. Further detail on which standards apply to different landlords can be found on our [standards page](#).

We assess the performance of landlords through inspections and by reviewing data that landlords are required to submit to us. In Depth Assessments (IDAs) were one of our previous assessment processes, which are now replaced by our new inspections programme from 1 April 2024. We also respond where there is an issue or a potential issue that may be material to a landlord's delivery of the outcomes of our standards. We publish regulatory judgements that describe our view of landlords' performance with our standards. We also publish grades for landlords with more than 1,000 social housing homes.

The Housing Ombudsman deals with individual complaints. When individual complaints are referred to us, we investigate if we consider that the issue may be material to a landlord's delivery of the outcomes of our standards. For more information about our approach to regulation, please see [Regulating the standards](#).