

Tenants' Annual Report

2023-24



Inside, read about:

- Our role as a social landlord
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Complaints review
- Tenant involvement
- Sustainability
- National recognition and more...

Sussex not-for-profit support, care,
and housing provider since 1972

Southdown

www.southdown.org



“
Peace is the
big difference
between here
and a hostel
”

“Peace is the big difference between here and a hostel. Settling in has been great. It’s my home. I’ve been dealing with my Resettlement Support Officer here. I put my trust in her, no worries.

If I want to speak to staff, it’s a phone call or text away. You’ve got to put your trust in them. It’s that simple.

If there’s something I’m not sure about, the guys will look into it. The service has been brilliant, 10 out of 10.”

- Stuart, Southdown tenant and client of the Southdown Steps service

Southdown Steps provides accommodation, housing management and tenancy support for people who have been homeless or living in temporary or supported accommodation, including hostels, in Adur and Worthing.

Welcome

I am delighted to present this year's Tenants' Annual Report, which highlights our commitment to ensuring that every tenant and shared owner has access to a place they can truly call home, with the right support tailored to your needs.

Over the past year, we have focused on understanding the condition of your homes and building plans for future reinvestment – whether that is upgrading kitchens and bathrooms, addressing damp and mould or improving energy efficiency. Our tenants' safety and wellbeing are our top priorities. We believe that safe and secure homes is the foundation for thriving communities.

We know that being a good landlord is about more than just buildings; it's about people. Our aim is to provide personalised housing management support, where and when it's needed. We want to ensure that every tenant feels secure and supported. Our tenant satisfaction measures (pages 7-9) illustrate how we are doing as a landlord and where we can improve.

We don't always get things right but we're committed to being transparent and responsive when things go wrong. Your complaints and concerns are valuable opportunities for us to learn and improve. We aim to resolve issues quickly and effectively, and use feedback to refine our processes and prevent future problems. Read our Complaints Review on page 10.

Your voices matter. Whether it's through surveys, forums or direct conversations, your involvement continues to be an essential part of shaping our services.

As Director of Housing & Assets. I'm responsible for ensuring Southdown provides safe, modern and well-managed homes, and that we meet the standards set for us by the Regulator of Social Housing. Read more about how you can help shape the services you receive inside. Thank you for your continued involvement, partnership, and trust.

Jim Aspdin, Director of Housing & Assets





We supported 502

tenants and shared owners, for whom we are the landlord or act on behalf of another landlord, to live independently and well in their own homes and local community.

In our role as a social landlord



Personalised support

As a small, supported housing provider, we provide our tenants with a personalised housing management service.

- We know our tenants well and they know us. We have 50 tenants for every one member of our Housing team. This enables us to listen, learn and adapt what we do to be the best landlord we can.
- 23% of our 502 tenants received additional support from our learning disability support services.
- 21 tenants were successfully supported to move on to independent living, enabling us to use our supported housing for other people that need it.



Southdown as a 'Force for Good'

One of Southdown's core values is to act as a 'Force for Good', which underpins our lobbying activities locally and nationally on issues important to people who access our services including our tenants.

Over the past year:

- We have continued to lobby for long-term revenue funding to support the development of new supported housing in Sussex as well as for fair funding to enable Southdown and other care providers to provide fair pay for care workers.
- Southdown's Director of Housing and Assets, Jim Aspdin, has been Chair of the East Sussex Housing Partnership's Net Zero sub-group, helping to support the development of a shared Housing Retrofit Strategy in the hope of addressing fuel poverty and the causes of climate change.
- We have developed new accommodation and support offers, in partnership with the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, for individuals who would otherwise find themselves 'stuck' in mental health hospitals.



Going the extra mile

One of our Housing Officers, Clive, received a deeply touching card from the family of a tenant who had sadly passed away. Clive had visited the tenant in hospital, where he was receiving end-of-life care. The tenant who had lost contact with his family agreed to Clive's offer to locate them to see him in hospital. Clive successfully reunited the tenant with his family, allowing them to say their goodbyes before he passed. The family's heartfelt card expressed profound gratitude for Clive's kindness and effort in making this reunion possible.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) have been introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in England as a means of assessing how well landlords are doing in providing good quality homes and services. TSMs include 'Tenant Perception' measures (obtained from our annual tenant satisfaction survey) and 'Landlord Performance' measures (a record of our performance in core areas relating to housing management and property repairs, safety and compliance).

Looking at TSMs, tenants can make meaningful comparisons between landlords and hold landlords to account for their performance. All social landlords are required to survey their tenants using the same questions and provide the same performance data. Southdown will be publishing its comparison with other providers via our website once this data is available.

Safe and secure homes

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our tenants is our top priority. We take great pride in maintaining the highest safety standards for all our properties.

In 2023-24:

- We reported 99.8% compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, the social housing benchmark for what tenants should expect from their home, making sure it is safe, warm, and decent.
- We reported 100% compliance in our Tenant Satisfaction Measures Report for Gas Safety, Fire Safety, Asbestos Management, Legionella Safety and Lift Safety.

More information is available on our website at:

www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/safeandsecurehomes/



To gain feedback on our performance as a landlord, we shared a survey with our tenants over the summer of 2023. Thank you to everybody that shared feedback. Your feedback is important to help us continually improve all areas of our services so that we remain a first-class provider of supported housing.

Results:



79%

Satisfied with the overall service we provide you.

Keeping properties in good repair



76.1%

Satisfied with the overall repair service we provide you.



75.6%

Satisfied with the time taken to complete your repair.



81.5%

Satisfied that your home is well maintained.

0.2%

Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.

93.2%

Proportion of non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.

93.6%

Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.

Maintaining building safety



84.1%

Satisfied that your home is safe.



100%

Gas safety checks carried out.



100%

Fire risk assessments carried out.



100%

Asbestos management surveys and re-inspected carried out.



100%

Legionella risk assessments carried out.



100%

Lift safety checks carried out.

Respectful and helpful engagement



77.4%

Satisfied that we listen to your views and act upon them.



72.6%

Satisfied that we keep you informed about things that matter to you.



85.2%

Agree that we treat you fairly and with respect.

Effective handling of complaints



55.3%

Satisfied with our approach to complaints handling.



66.8%

Stage 1 complaints responded to within Complaints handling code timescales.



100%

Stage 2 complaints responded to within Complaints handling code timescales.

Responsible neighbourhood management



76.1%

Satisfied that we keep communal areas clean and well maintained



66.1%

Satisfied that we make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.



66.7%

Satisfied with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour.

A copy of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures Report for 2023-2024 is available to view or download from our website at:

www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/safeandsecurehomes/

Complaints review

Southdown delivered services to over 11,000 people over the year 2023-24. Whilst delivering a quality service for people is our core priority, we recognise we don't always get it right.

As both a care and support provider and a Registered Provider of Social Housing to tenants and shared owners, our complaints review includes complaints received across the whole of Southdown over the period from 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024.

Complaints in 2023-24

- A total of 21 complaints were received across all our operations, with four escalated to Stage 2.
- There were three complaints relating to our housing operations, one of which was escalated to Stage 2.
- Overall, there was an increase in complaints (two more than 2022-23), but a 2% reduction in those that were escalated to Stage 2.

Given the low number of complaints relating to our housing services, it was difficult to establish any overall themes. General learning from the complaints received was the importance of more clearly communicating the levels of service clients and tenants can expect and ensuring there is consultation when there is a change of service offer.

In the coming year, we'll be developing our approach to complaints handling to ensure the lessons from complaints are fully captured and service improvements implemented. In addition, we will ensure that there is client and tenant representation in our annual review of complaints.

You can read the full Complaints Review on our website at:

www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/safeandsecurehomes/

Complaints handling self-assessment against Housing Ombudsman's Code

Every year, we carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's revised complaints handling code. Our self-assessment sets out how we comply with the Housing Ombudsman code and the further actions we're taking to improve how we handle and learn from complaints and how we make this information available to tenants and other stakeholders.

You can read our latest self-assessment document on our website, at:

www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/safeandsecurehomes/

Tenant involvement

Client and tenant voice is important to us and is one of our four core Business Strategy priorities.

To discuss ongoing involvement and co-production initiatives within the organisation, we hosted two interactive workshops. These sessions brought together colleagues from across Southdown, alongside clients and tenants, to explore current best practices and identify areas for growth.

One key outcome of the workshops was the decision to recruit a dedicated Client and Tenant Involvement Lead; a role designed to ensure these voices continue to shape our work. Rebecca Sharma took on the role in April 2024 and has since been working closely with our service teams to develop involvement opportunities.

Over the coming year we are hoping to involve tenants in the following:

- A review of complaints received and the related service improvement plans identified
- Co-creation of an adaptations policy and a Code of Conduct for housing staff and contractors
- A shared 'together with tenants' client commitment self-assessment

We'll be in touch nearer the time but please feel free to get in touch with Rebecca if you would like to get involved or have suggestions of your own about how you can help us shape our services to you.

To contact Rebecca, you can:

Email: CT@Southdown.org **or call:** 07458 146991

See back page for alternative ways of providing feedback.

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Listening to our clients and tenants is essential. Their experiences and ideas help us create services that truly meet their needs. By involving the people we support, we can make sure our work focuses on what really matters.

- Rebecca Sharma,
Client and Tenant Involvement Lead

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Sustainability

We're committed to keeping our environmental impact to a minimum and, over the long term, to ensure that all our practices and developments are sustainable.

Of our 226 properties that need EPC energy ratings, 150 (66.4%) of them are rated C or above. Five of our properties were moved from D to C in the past year. C rating indicates that a home was built using energy efficient building methods or one that underwent renovation work aimed at increasing its energy efficiency – it indicates the home is between 69 and 80% energy efficient. The average home is between 55 and 68% energy efficient. A good EPC rating helps to keep energy bills lower.

In Worthing, we installed cutting-edge solar panel technology in our Southdown Steps accommodation and housing support service for people who have been homeless or living in temporary or supported accommodation. The technology will provide energy saving for each of the individual flats (rooftop solar has previously not been accessible for flats, only standalone homes).



National recognition

In 2023 we were recognised by the national Affordable Housing Awards as the Best Supported Housing Landlord. We were also 'highly commended' in the coveted Landlord of the Year award category which we were also shortlisted for.

Recognising excellence in UK Housing, the Affordable Housing Awards identify the social landlords, charities and partners, who work with their communities to deliver great outcomes for tenants and residents.



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“Being recognised for our personalised approach and focus on partnership working to meet our tenants’ needs is fantastic recognition of the hard work of our housing management, property services and client services’ teams.

As a small, supported housing provider, we know our tenants well and they know us. We have 50 tenants for every one member of our Housing team. This enables us to listen, learn and adapt what we do to be the best landlord we can.”

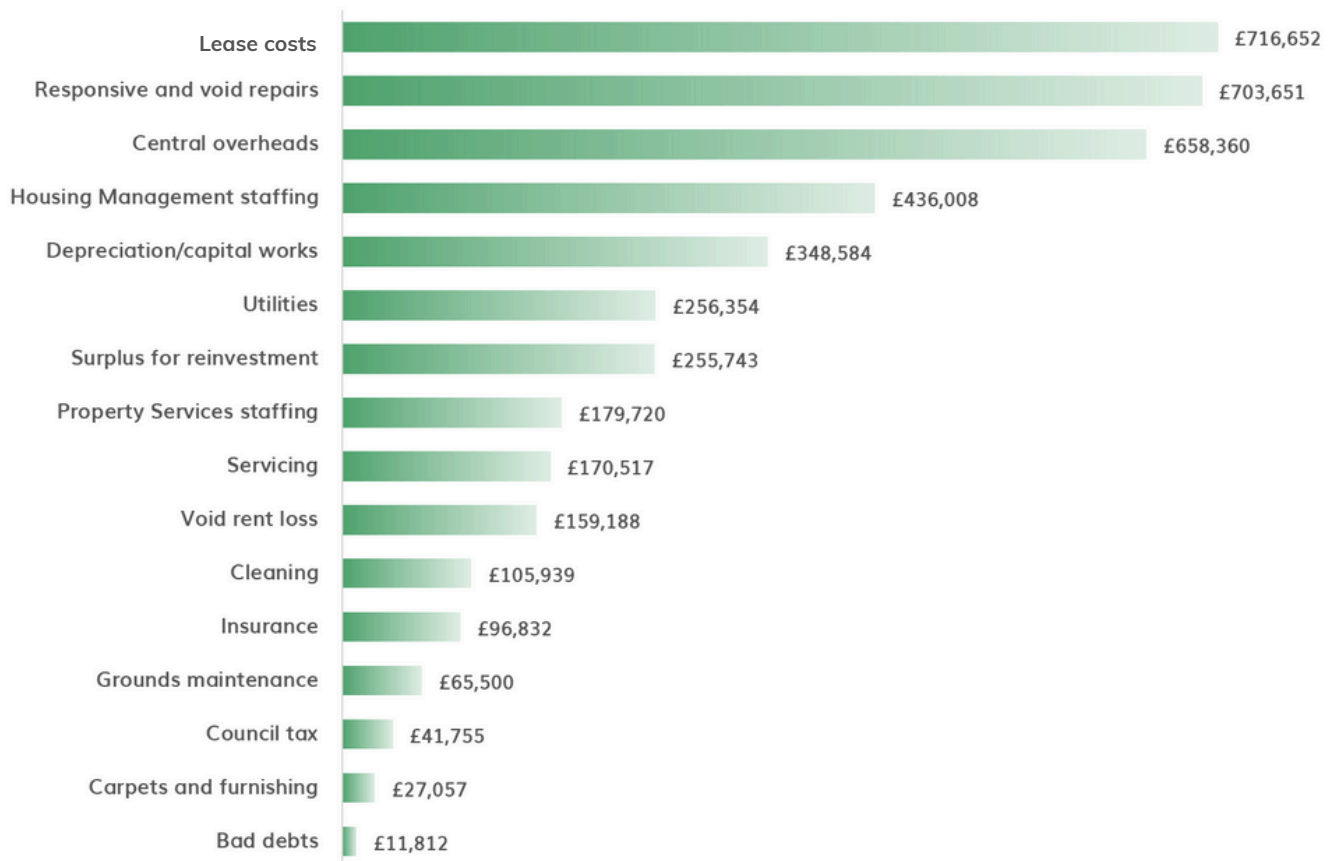
– Jim Aspden, Director of Housing and Assets

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Financial performance and reinvestment

Financial performance over the 2023 -24 year was poorer than budgeted. Particularly notable was the impact of high utility costs, unbudgeted major works identified, and long void periods relating to damp and mould due to excessive rainfall and difficulty in identifying suitable contractors. Costs for fire safety work remained high as we continued to resolve issues, particularly at a block taken on from another Housing Association.

Housing Financial Performance 2023-24



Southdown continues to see high maintenance costs, particularly relating to specialist compliance areas and repairs, and will be seeking to undertake a project over the coming year to better anticipate these costs moving forward.

Did you know?

Southdown is a care and support provider as well as a landlord for supported housing.

In 2023-24, we provided support for over 11,000 people across Sussex through a wide range of mental health, homelessness prevention and learning disability support.

You can read or download Southdown's Impact Report online at:

<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/146afcc620.html>

Or by scanning this QR code with a smartphone:



Southdown support

We offer a range of support for people experiencing mental health challenges, people who are at risk of homelessness, and people with physical and learning disabilities across Sussex.

Our service directory, which lists the support we provide, is available on our website at:
www.southdown.org/how-we-help/service-directory/

In addition, we are the lead provider of the UOK mental health networks in Brighton & Hove and East Sussex.

Visit www.uok.org.uk or call 0808 196 1768 to find out what support is available.

All support is free of charge.

We supported
11,367

people* in the 60 services we provide across Sussex to take meaningful steps towards a better life.

**refers to timelines of support rather than unique individuals*

We want to hear from you. Whether you would like to report a repair, make a complaint or provide feedback, please get in touch.

Reporting a repair

Contact our Property Services Team

Call: 01273 898 744

This number is available at any time of the day or night, during the week as well as weekends.

You can also email us at:

property.services@southdown.org

Feedback and general enquiries

Call: 01273 405 800

Email: housing@southdown.org

Write to us:

Southdown, 2 Bell Lane, Lewes,
East Sussex, BN7 1JU

Tenant satisfaction surveys

We send out tenant satisfaction surveys for every property services job as well as carry out random inspection visits to spot check the quality of work. Please take time to complete and return the surveys as they help us to ensure our contractors are doing a good job.



Scan for website



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www.southdown.org