

Tenants' Annual Report


2022-23

An update from our Housing Management and Property Services teams.

Inside, read about:

- Introduction by Jim Aspdlin, Director of Housing and Business Services
- Our role as a social landlord
- How we provide safe and secure homes
- Recent property refurbishments and conversions
- Who we have supported
- Our new support contracts
- A tenant story
- Annual tenant satisfaction survey
- How we responded to your feedback
- A review of your complaints




A woman with short brown hair and glasses is smiling. She is wearing a white cardigan over a floral patterned blouse. She is sitting on a sofa with a vibrant, multi-colored patterned fabric. A grey and white cat with blue eyes is visible on the sofa next to her. The background is a plain light-colored wall.

"To be a Southdown
tenant is to finally
feel settled"

- Annabel, tenant

Introduction

 I'm delighted to share with you our **Tenants' Annual Report for 2022-23**; a report we produce for our tenants highlighting what we have done in our role as a landlord over the past 12 months.

It is important to us that our tenants, as well as other stakeholders, can access information to review our performance as a landlord. As well as this report, we share information on our website (www.southdown.org). Our team are also on hand to answer queries.

We know we don't always get everything right first time. When this happens, our aim is to put things right quickly and effectively, and to take time to understand the 'why' and not just the 'what'.

Looking back over the year, I'm really proud of the work of our Housing Management and Property Services team. I'd like to say a big thank you to our tenants too who shared their time, thoughts and experiences.

In the coming year, we aim to develop further opportunities for tenants and shared owners to get involved to shape what we do and how we do things. We'd love you to be part of shaping our future; if you'd like to be involved, please get in touch (via your Housing Officer, Housing Assistant or email us at housing@southdown.org).

It's been a busy year. As you'll read in this report, our key focus areas have included ensuring our buildings (our tenants' homes) are safe and secure; developing more supported housing for the people that need it; engaging tenants in what we do; supporting tenants as the cost of living rises; and continuing to explore ways to be energy efficient.

I hope you find this report interesting and useful.
Best wishes,

Jim Aspdin, Director of Housing and Business Services



In our role as a social landlord

Personalised support



We supported 571 tenants and shared owners, for whom we are the landlord for or act on behalf of another landlord. As a small, supported housing provider, we provide our tenants with a personalised Housing Management service. Typically, we have around 50 tenants for every one member of Housing Management staff.

At Southdown, the safety and welfare of our tenants is important to us, and we're proud of the safety standards for our properties.

- ✓ Our overall compliance to provide our tenants with safe and secure homes averaged at 98.5% throughout the year.
- ✓ 100% of fire risk assessments were carried out over the year.
- ✓ We started reporting properties affected by damp and mould in February 2023 in monthly compliance reports. At the end of March 2023, we reported 11 properties that were being affected and had open cases that we were progressing.

More information on our performance as a landlord is available on our website: www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/safeandsecurehomes



Tenant engagement



We have continued to expand our Tenant Engagement and Voice activities. We now have in place a well embedded range of engagement and feedback activities and have undertaken considerable work to ensure that we meet the new Tenant Consumer Regulation Standards from April 2023.

If you would like to be involved with our Tenants Engagement and Voice activities, or would like more information, please get in touch (contact details on page 11).

Energy efficiency



To further support our environmental sustainability programme, we were successful in a consortium bid, led by Clarion, to Wave 2 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. The funding will support us in our commitment to addressing fuel poverty in social housing and driving a transition to a low-carbon future for our business and our tenants.



Significant property work

As part of setting up new services, we also did a wholesale refurbishment of a property block in Worthing, including installation of a sprinkler system and solar panels which allow tenants to share in the energy generated, thus reducing their bills.

We also converted a property block in Brighton into a psychologically informed environment for people accessing our Discharge to Assess service.

In addition, we started a major project at another property block in Brighton for tenants with a physical disability installing significant safety measures such as a sprinkler and an enhanced social care alarm.



Did you know?

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

In 2022-23, we provided support for over 10,000 people across Sussex through a wide range of mental health, homelessness prevention and learning disability support.

New support contracts

We were awarded an extension to our Discharge to Assess service, which offers short-term packages of personalised support and accommodation for people ready to leave mental health inpatient settings.

We also successfully launched our Southdown Steps service, providing housing and support to former rough sleepers in Worthing.

And we launched our Southdown Moves service which provides accommodation, housing management and support for people with low support mental health needs in Brighton and Hove.



Around one in six of our 571 tenants received additional support from our learning disability support services.

33 tenants (an increase of five year on year) were successfully supported to move on to independent living, enabling us to use our supported housing for other people that need it.

Read Southdown's Impact Report online at:
www.southdown.org/about-us/plans-reports



Sam's story



I've been a Southdown tenant for a couple of years. They're an amazing landlord. They listen to us. Sort issues out. I feel valued.

We have the mobile numbers and email addresses of Housing Officers and Assistants. They'll always call back. I have that trust with them. There's a lot of flexibility with my Housing Officer. They're very accommodating and personable. And because of that, I'll do my best for them. It's a reciprocal relationship.

Southdown holds meetings with residents in my building every six months. It makes a huge difference being listened to. I can trust them to share what's important to me. They listen and act on it.

Southdown's Tenant Communication and Involvement Officer approached me about participating in tenant involvement activities. I recently sat on interviews for a Financial Adviser and a Housing Assistant. My impression counts. I feel respected and equal in interviews. The benefit for Southdown of my tenant involvement activities is I'm honest. The benefits for me are it gets me out. It does my mental health good as well.

It's very positive being part of Southdown."



Annual tenant satisfaction survey

Thank you to everybody that shared feedback in our latest 2023 tenant satisfaction survey. 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.

You said:



80% satisfied with the overall support we provided.



87% agreed with this statement: 'My landlord treats me fairly and with respect'.



75% satisfied with the overall repairs service we provided.



55% satisfied with our approach to complaints handling.*



87% satisfied that we provide a home that is well-maintained.



82% satisfied that communal areas are clean and well-maintained.



89% satisfied that we provide a home that is safe.



63% satisfied with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour.*



79% satisfied that we listen to your views and act upon them.



74% satisfied that we keep you informed about things that matter to you.

Please note:

The % measurements shown above include responses where tenants said they were 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied;' they don't include 'neutral' responses – this aligns to the housing sector's approach regarding tenant surveys. As part of our review of the feedback shared, we are also looking at the 'neutral' responses (which also include 'not applicable' responses) as well as 'dissatisfied' responses.

*Review of data shows that tenants selected a 'neutral' response if they had no experience of Southdown's handling of complaints or anti-social behaviour.

In the coming weeks, we will be in touch to share what we will do in response to your feedback. Thank you once again for sharing your thoughts, we really appreciate it.

You said, we did...



As well as conducting an annual tenant satisfaction survey, we listen and learn from our tenants in every interaction we have with them as well as through our tenant engagement activities.

See below for a summary of two areas you told us were important to you and what we did in response:

We have talked to you more about the ways we can listen to your views and act on them

We have a dedicated Tenant Involvement email address for tenants to use and we welcome all tenants to an Involvement Group that has been set up.

Email: tenantinvolvement@southdown.org

We introduced a quarterly 'You said, we did' initiative to share lessons learnt from complaints with tenants.

See our Complaints Review on the next page and our annual complaints summary on our website: www.southdown.org/about-us/openness-transparency



We have acted on feedback about communal spaces

We carried out a communal areas survey which showed that many of the issues raised were where Southdown wasn't the head landlord. As such, we contacted the head landlords to ask them to rectify areas for concern. An example of this is when a tenant highlighted that communal areas weren't being cleaned properly which we raised with the head landlord and soon after a new cleaning contractor had been put in place.

Complaints review

To ensure we provide excellent support it is important that we learn from the experiences of our tenants. This includes learning from complaints we receive.

Our annual Complaints Review provides a summary of the complaints we received over the year as well as our learning.

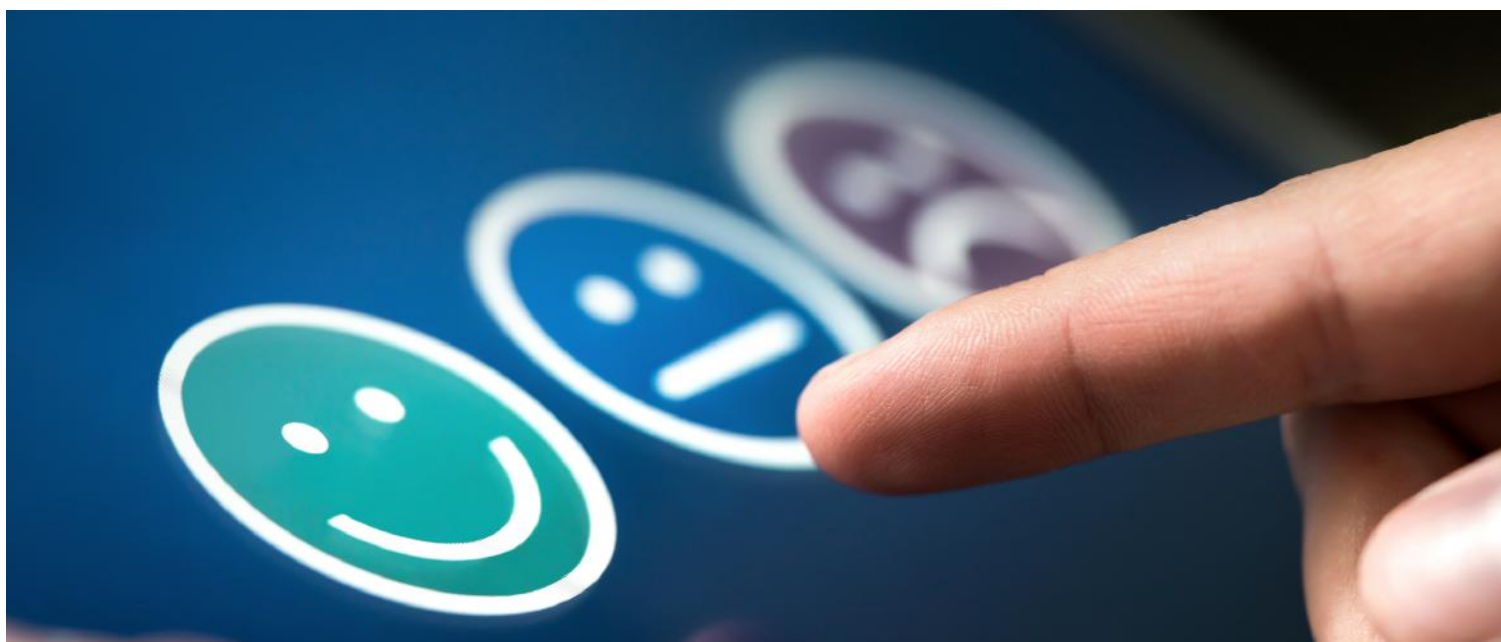
In 2022-23, we continued to receive only a small number of complaints (a total of six). Due to the small number, it is difficult to identify a single theme. Lessons from the complaints we upheld reinforced the need for a personalised service to tenants and the importance of consultation – both formal and informal - in really capturing tenants' views and opinions before Southdown takes action.

You can read an overview of the complaints we received on our website – the review draws out themes well as our learning from these and the actions we have taken as a result.

In addition, in May 2023, we carried out a 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 Annual Complaints Review and our Complaints Handling Self-Assessment Against the Housing Ombudsman's Code on our website:

www.southdown.org/about-us/openness-transparency



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.

