

Providing specialist housing, care and support for vulnerable people in Sussex since 1972



Easy Read Annual Report for Tenants

2020-21

We are a specialist housing association committed to preventing homelessness and supporting vulnerable people's health, wellbeing and independence. We are a not-for-profit organisation and exist for the benefit of local communities.

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Welcome from Jim Aspdin
Southdown's Director of Housing



Welcome to our 2020-21 Annual Report for Tenants.



This has been another challenging year because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

We have found different ways to keep in touch with you, like video calls.



We are slowly getting back to face-to-face meetings and starting our compliance checks again.



This report will tell you what we have done to support our tenants in the last year

And also what we plan to do this year.



Please get in touch with us if you have any questions about anything in this report.



You can also write to us what you think about the services you receive from Southdown.

About Southdown



We were formed in 1972 and are the largest not-for-profit specialist provider of care, support and housing services for over 10,000 vulnerable people in Sussex.



We are a landlord for 509 tenants.

Southdown as a landlord

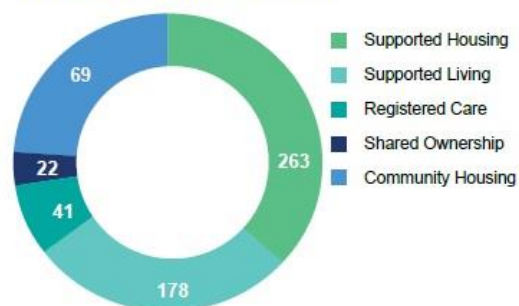


As a specialist housing provider and landlord, we provide Supported Housing for vulnerable people.

Our property types



Ways our properties are used



How we are performing as a Landlord – new website page



We have recently introduced a new section to our website so that tenants can more easily find information about how we are performing.



We now regularly update this page with information about our rent collection rates, our response times for emergency, urgent and standard repairs and our monthly statistics around property safety and compliance.

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

TENANT STORY



During the Covid-19 pandemic, Southdown's housing management were contacted by the team at one of our Supported Living learning disability services in Hove to ask if they could help a tenant with hoarding issues.



Working alongside the support team at the service, Housing Officer, Gemma, supported the tenant to address his hoarding which included agreement to having his flat cleared and deep cleaned and regular support to maintain a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene.



The tenant said – *“My home makes me feel great. It wasn’t great when it had lots of stuff in. I can now relax and watch films and read books.”*

How to access our housing



Council

People who need Supported Housing should contact their local council who can make a referral to us.

As we provide Supported Housing, people referred to us need to have identified support needs.



Once someone is referred, we contact them to talk about their housing and support needs and, if they meet the criteria, arrange for them to view a property once one becomes available.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR – 2020-21



We provided housing and support for **509** tenants and shared owners.



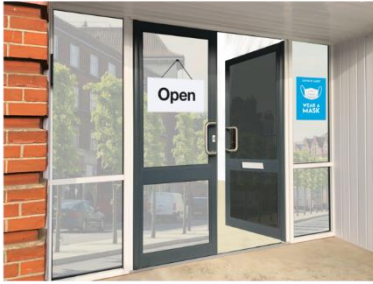
1 in 4 of our tenants received support from our Learning Disability services



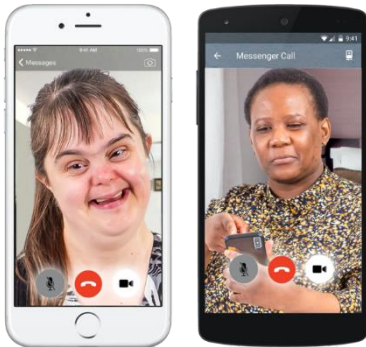
Personalised support – our Housing Officers work with fewer tenants than some other housing associations.



99.4% of emergency repairs were completed on time.



We identified and agreed terms to buy and develop a 12 unit Supported Housing and Mental Health Wellbeing Venue in Brighton and Hove (for completion Summer 2023)



We adapted to lockdown restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic by doing remote viewings, video tours and virtual sign-ups. We made 27 new lettings.



Started development of a Housing Sustainability Strategy to enable Southdown to achieve energy efficiency targets for social housing by 2050.



We made 2,000 calls to 400 tenants to keep in touch during the Covid-19 pandemic.

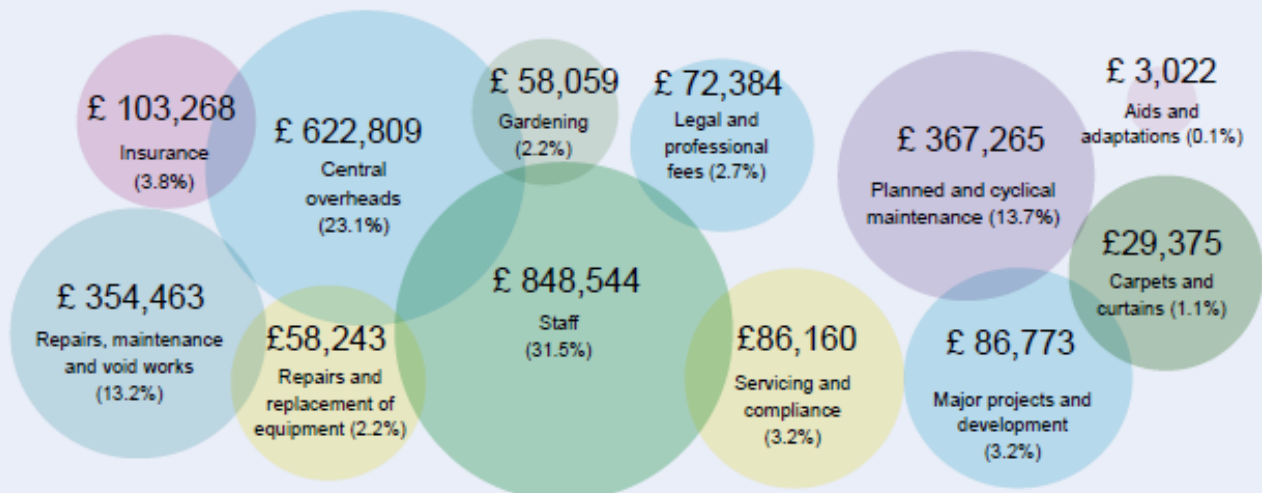
Value for Money – How we spend our housing-related income



Value for Money, for us, doesn't mean simply doing things at the lowest cost.

It is demonstrating how we deliver our vision and values by providing services at quality standards in the most cost efficient and effective way.

How every £1 of our housing-related income is spent:



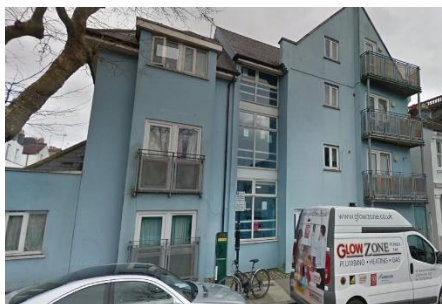
Plans for 2021-2022



Over the coming months, we will be welcoming new members of the team to our Housing Management and Property Services.

We have our new Tenant Involvement & Communications Officer, Carrie Croll, who started in August.

We have also introduced a new post of Supported Living Partnership Assistant.



We have taken ownership of a block of ten flats in the Seven Dials area of Brighton which are specially adapted for people with a physical disability.

We have also taken on an eight property block near Preston Park for younger residents being supported to move on into permanent settled accommodation.

Focus on: Financial Inclusion



Our Financial Inclusion Officer, Simon Egan-Payne, helped 92 tenants in the 12 months to April 2021, securing £15, 243 in backdated benefit payments.



Simon also secured an additional combined total of £1,306 in weekly benefits, and £342 in monthly benefits, for tenants, whom he has helped. This amounts to an additional income for our tenants of £72,015 per year



If you know that your financial circumstances are likely to change or if your financial circumstances have already changed, speak to our Financial Inclusion Officer as soon as you can.

Focus on: Complaints



We know we don't always get things right first time.

Complaints and feedback we receive from tenants and members of the public provide opportunities for learning and developing our approach to service delivery.



During 2020/21 we received 8 complaints.

3 were upheld and 3 were partly upheld.



We have also changed our internal complaints process, reducing it from a three stage process to two stages.

This means that where tenants remain unhappy with the outcome of their complaint they are able to proceed to the Housing Ombudsman more quickly.



We value all feedback, whether a complaint or compliment. You can find our contact details, to use to get in touch, on the back page of this document.

Planned Maintenance



We did extra consultation with tenants this year to find out which people who were earmarked for a new kitchen and/or bathroom would feel comfortable with contractors in their home and then worked the plan around their wishes.

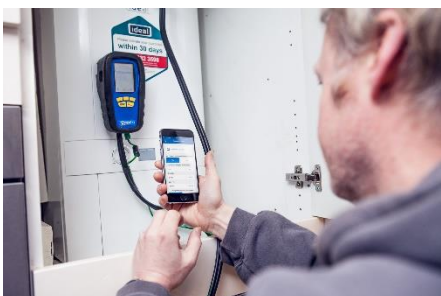


We also had to put lots of internal decoration works on hold during the winter peak in Covid numbers and then had a big push in February and March to get lots of those works done all together in time for the end of the financial year.

Compliance



We took the decision not test electrical appliances or our special mixing taps until April 2021 because we felt that the additional risk of having contractors into our services was too high when weighed against the risk of not doing these usual inspections.



We were able to remain 100% compliance on our landlord gas safety checks most months and any months where 100% compliance was not achieved, this was down to either self-isolation or shielding of the resident.

Update on Services



Discharge to access service

Since October 2020 we have been pleased to be involved in a pilot scheme in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council and Venture People, providing accommodation and intensive daily support to clients with mental health needs coming out of hospital.

So far we have successfully housed and supported 11 clients through this service and hope to expand the service.



RISE partnership

In December 2020, we entered into a partnership once more with RISE, a local Domestic Abuse charity, to provide two units of accommodation for their LGBTQ Refuge Project. This project specifically aims to provide accommodation and support to people from the LGBTQ community suffering from domestic abuse.

Tenant Matters



Evacuation Needs Work

Throughout the summer of 2020 our Housing Officers and Housing Assistants spoke to some tenants who felt that they might have some difficulties getting out of their building if there was a fire.

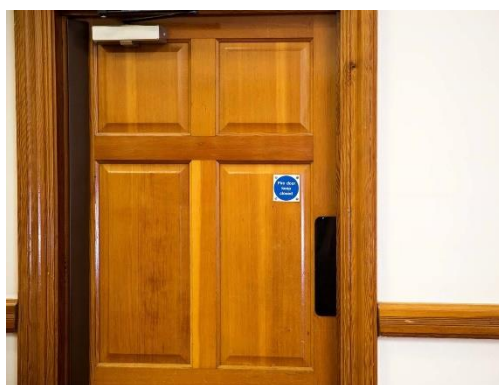
Person Centred Fire Risk Assessments were undertaken with those tenants and we hold this information centrally and can make it available to the fire brigade instantly in an emergency.



Digital Transformation Project

The past 12 months have forced us to look at our processes and how we can support tenants better through online working. We've made many of our daily processes more automated.

Automation gives us more time to focus on our clients.



Fire and Building Safety Legislation

We anticipate that we will be required to audit all fire doors, including tenant's front doors and communal doors on an annual and quarterly cycle.

This will be new and time-intensive requirement for us and we will need tenants' cooperation to allow access to inspect their front doors. It is very important that you let us know immediately if the door closer on your front door becomes damaged or broken in any way.

You can report this to us by email at:
Property.services@southdown.org or call
01273 898 744.

How to contact us

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:

To report a repair call our
Property Services Team:

01273 898 744

An out of hours contact service is available for Southdown tenants when our main office is closed. If an emergency or urgent repair is needed overnight, at weekends or on bank holidays call our 24 hour cover service on: **01323 636 202**.



Tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing can also use the fax to contact this service on **01323 636 398**.

How to contact us:

Providing feedback or general enquiries:



01273 405 800



feedback@southdown.org

You can also write to us at:



Southdown Housing Association
2 Bell Lane
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1JU

Share your feedback

We send out customer satisfaction surveys for every job and carry out random post inspection visits. Please take time to complete and return the surveys as it helps us to ensure our contractors are doing a good job. If there are any repairs or maintenance issues at your property, in addition to speaking to your Housing Officer, you can also email the Property Services direct at property.services@southdown.org

Southdown Housing Association

Registered and Head Office

2 Bell Lane, Lewes
East Sussex, BN7 1JU

Phone: 01273 405 800

Email: info@southdown.org

Website: www.southdown.org

www.southdown.org



Southdown-Housing-Association



@SouthdownHA

Southdown is an exempt charity registered with the regulator of social housing (L1829).

Southdown is also a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (20755R)