

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



Annual Report

for Tenants

2018-19

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.

Director of Housing's Welcome

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2018-19 Annual Report for Tenants.

This is an opportunity for us to take stock on the past year and let you know our plans for the year ahead.

As a response to funding cuts to support services, Southdown has increased staffing within our Housing Team so we are able to be there for you when you need help and support.

We have also invested in developing new properties, allowing people who would otherwise be living in hospital settings to live independently.

We continue to work closely with Local Authorities across Sussex to find solutions to prevent homelessness and to make a positive impact upon the lives of the people we exist to support.

I hope you find this report interesting and useful.

As ever, if you have any ideas or suggestions on how we can improve our housing services for our tenants please get in touch.

Kind regards,



Jim Aspdin



Housing & Property Services Manager's Foreword

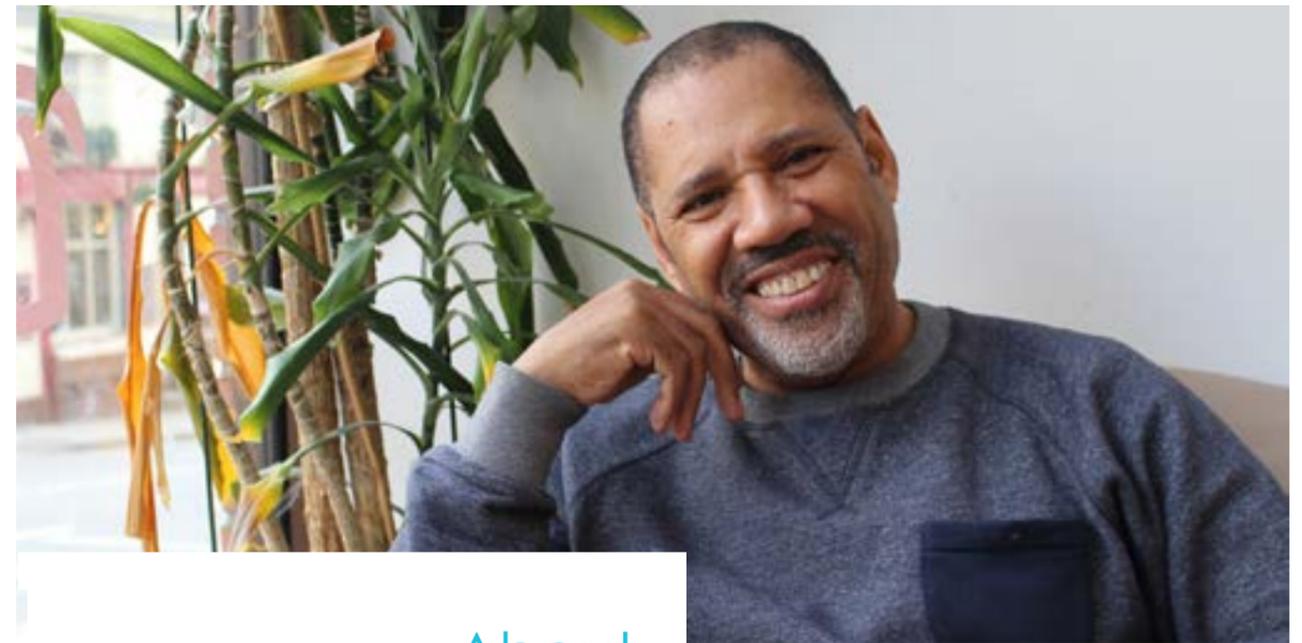
Since joining Southdown in November 2018, it has been an incredibly busy time for the Housing Division with everybody working hard to ensure the services we provide are the best they can be.

Our Housing and Property Services' teams have streamlined our business processes, ready for the implementation of a new Housing Management System, which went live in September 2019. This new system will help make business processes quicker, freeing the team up to spend more time on things that matter to you - ensuring you are safe and happy in your own home, and satisfied with all aspects of the service you receive from us as your landlord.

We have also developed a new structure for our Housing Management Team to enhance the support you receive. The new structure will allow us to be more effective in our visits, increase visibility and availability of our frontline staff to tenants and expand the resources available for dealing with cases such as serious anti-social behaviour and dangerous hoarding.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Sarah Murphy



About Southdown

We're Southdown, the largest not-for-profit provider of housing, care and support for vulnerable people across Sussex.

We are a specialist housing provider and landlord for 652 people. In addition, we provide support for over 10,000 people a year through a range of homelessness prevention, mental health, employment and learning disability support.

Our mission is to offer vulnerable people the support they need to develop, maintain and improve good health, wellbeing and independence.

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Cover image:
Tenant of
Southdown's
learning disability
services with a
Support Worker.



Services we provide:

- Housing Management Support
- Repairs & Maintenance Service
- Property Development
- Tenant Quality Team
- Welfare Benefits Support

Southdown as a landlord

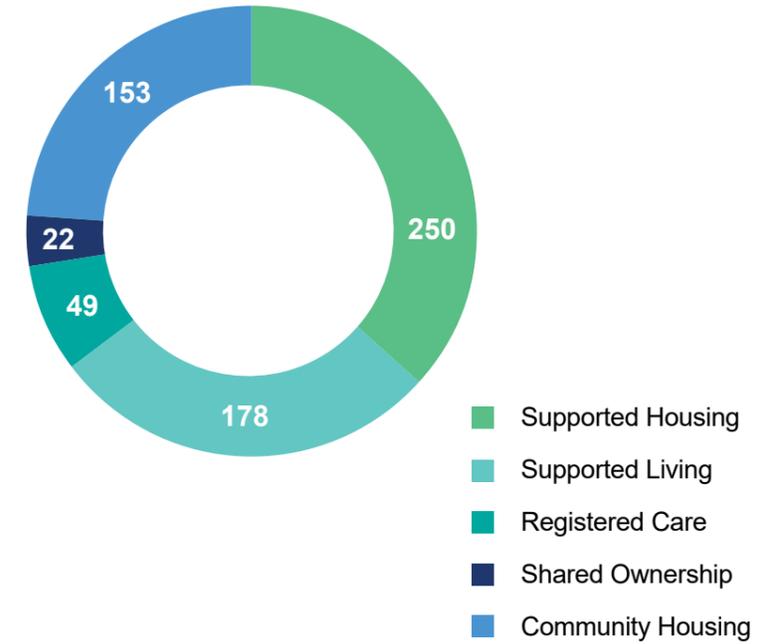
As a specialist housing provider and landlord, we provide Supported Housing for vulnerable people. This means we provide both housing and additional personalised support to enable people to live as independently as possible in their community.



Our property types



Ways our properties are used



How to access our housing

People needing Supported Housing should approach 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 will make contact to discuss their housing and support needs and, if they meet the criteria, arrange for them to view a property once one becomes available.

FOCUS ON: Welfare Benefits Support

Tenants of Southdown have access to support provided by our Housing Division's dedicated Financial Inclusion Officer, Simon Egan-Payne (pictured right).

Simon takes referrals from our Housing Officers and Housing Assistants and works with tenants to ensure they get the benefits help they need.

Simon can support you with benefit calculations and entitlement checks to ensure you are getting everything you are entitled to.

If you're not receiving all the benefits you are eligible for, Simon can assist you to make applications, challenge wrong decisions and request backdates to help maximise your income.

Simon is also able to offer some basic advice as well as signpost to other agencies to assist with budgeting and debt advice.

If you are struggling financially, please speak to your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant who can refer you to Simon for one-to-one support.



2018-19 Highlights

652

tenants and shared owners across Sussex we provided housing and support for.

100%

tenant satisfaction with day-to-day repairs.

1 in 4

of our tenants received additional support from our Learning Disability Services.

£2.1 million

invested to develop and maintain affordable social housing for vulnerable people in Sussex.

97%

of tenants surveyed said they were satisfied with the support they've received from us and that it had made a positive difference to their life.

97%

of rent was collected successfully.

Personalised Support

Our Housing Officers have fewer allocated tenants compared to general needs housing associations.

100%

of emergency repairs were completed on time.

£85,000

has been recovered as back payments of benefits for Southdown clients and tenants.



We completed development of six self-contained flats in Brighton for people with learning disabilities and complex behavioural needs.



Tenant Story

"I'm a tenant of Southdown. I've lived here for a year. It's changed my life.

I lived with a friend before I came here. I started sleeping on his sofa because my previous housing association property wasn't suitable for my mobility needs or my mental health. I felt isolated.

Southdown first helped me when their Tenancy Sustainment Coordinator visited my friend. They noticed that I needed support and that's how I got involved with Southdown.

My Southdown Housing Officer did such an awesome job. It was only a few weeks after meeting her that this flat became available.

I said 'yes' straightaway when Southdown offered me this flat. Walking through the front door and seeing it was on the ground floor, had a wet-room, a built-in cooker, and a garden, was massive for me.

Because my mobility needs have been met it has helped with my mental health, but it was overwhelming and emotional and scary when I moved in. It was a massive change.

I've had a good team around me. My Housing Officer was sorting out my tenancy and I was getting support from Southdown's Home Works service and a Financial Inclusion Officer to help with changing my bills and utilities during the move.

My Housing Officer has been really, really outstanding – she deserves a medal. She knew I was ready to live independently. She spoke to me and supported me as a human being. When some people realise you have mental health problems, they judge you. Southdown has never done that.

Because I am more settled and calm here, I have more concentration span than I used to have so I've been able to go back to my arts and crafts.

I also started fostering a dog and have since adopted him. He's changed my life. My Community Psychiatric Nurse sees how happy I am. It's true what they say – dogs can help with mental health.

It's so nice to come home and have him greet me. And it's so nice to see him happy and secure. He feels safe. It's a match made in heaven.

I'm more hopeful about my future. The support I've received has been outstanding. I couldn't ask for anything better. I feel safe and comfortable and secure knowing that I can call this place my home. Home is where the heart is."

"I'm more hopeful about the future. The support has been outstanding"

Our Tenant Charter



Housing Officers

We will provide a named Housing Officer for all tenants to raise issues with and liaise around tenancy issues in addition to any other support tenants receive from us.



Anti-Social Behaviour

We will respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour within two working days of a Housing Officer being informed, offer home visits to all tenants making complaints and communicate what action we are taking to help resolve the issue.



Shared Ownership

We will offer an annual visit from the named the Housing Revenue Officer following issue of the service charge statements. We will include all shared owners in regular organisational updates from us.



Tenant Involvement

Tenants will be invited to attend at least twice yearly tenant focus groups and to participate in an annual tenant survey to feedback on how we have performed as a landlord.



Property Inspections

Tenants will be notified of property inspections and provided with opportunities to feedback any concerns they have for individual flats or the communal areas of the property.



Carpets and Curtains

We will provide carpets and curtains as standard in all properties that we let at the point of move-in.



Post Work Inspections

We will post-inspect at least 12% of day-to-day maintenance jobs raised and 100% of major, cyclical and planned works to ensure our tenants are getting a good quality maintenance service.



Repairs

Tenants will be offered three choices of appointment times for repairs.



Value for Money

We will publish an annual Value for Money self-assessment report that demonstrates how we are making best use of available resources.



24 Hour Helpline for Properties

Where we are responsible for repairs, we will provide a free out-of-hours emergency helpline for tenants needing to report emergency or urgent repairs outside normal working hours.

Managing money matters



Managing your finances well is vital in order to pay your rent and maintain your tenancy. It can also help you to stay out of, or sort out debt problems, as well as to access any benefits you may be entitled to.

Welfare Reform

Over the past year, we have seen the continued rollout of Universal Credit across Sussex. However, you don't need to do anything until you hear from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about moving to Universal Credit, unless you have a change in circumstances.

If you receive a letter from the DWP advising that you are being moved to Universal Credit please contact us straight away so we can check whether you should remain on Housing Benefit depending on the level of support you receive. Call us on 01273 405 800.

Maximising money and budgeting

As well as accessing support from your Housing Officer, there are many other ways to help budget your money:

Credit Unions: Similar to banks, these are savings and loans co-operatives, owned and operated by their members. The East Sussex Credit Union offers specialist help for people to get ready for Universal Credit (which requires a bank account for money to be paid into each month). They also provide savings accounts that allow you to divide your savings into separate pots to help you manage your money. Boom! is the name for the West Sussex and Surrey credit union and they also offer current accounts, savings accounts and loans aimed at helping you manage your money and access credit at lower interest rates than typical banks.

Our Housing Officers are on hand to support you in a range of ways, including help to:

- Check you're receiving all the benefits you're entitled to
- Develop computer skills so you can make claims online
- Advise on where to go to access computers
- Develop expertise in money management and choosing the right bank account
- Build links with local financial support services

The Money Advice Service: This free, impartial money advice service was set up by the Government. Visit their website for a wealth of resources including tools and advice to manage your money, prioritise and pay of debts and seek advice if you think you have been the victim of a scam. www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Bank accounts: It is important to open a bank account if you don't already have one, as benefits and wages are now paid directly by bank transfer. Everyone should be able to open a basic bank account, irrespective of your credit rating. Most banks will now also accept applications without the need for photo identification.

Maximising income: Your Housing Officer can arrange for you to have a benefit check to ensure that you are receiving everything that you should be, or to look at your entitlement if your circumstances change. It is also worth re-assessing your outgoings. Utilities, telephone bills and insurance costs could all potentially be reduced. Comparison websites are great to find the best deals.



Tenant involvement



Southdown is an open, learning and listening organisation constantly reviewing and changing services based on what people tell us they want.

For our housing services the most important voices in this process are the people who actually experience the services we provide - our tenants.

'Involvement' is how we describe how we seek the views of our tenants.

Our involvement commitment is:

- Make giving feedback as simple and instant as possible
- Maximise the number of tenants who provide feedback
- Ensure tenants understand the genuine value we place on feedback
- Use feedback to enhance the services we provide, and communicate what we have learnt and changed as a result of what we have been told

Appreciating that tenants may want to be involved with us in different ways, and this can change dependent on your current health, priorities or interests, we have developed a range of activities.

Details can be found on our website www.southdown.org/client-involvement or just ask your Housing Officer.



Feedback

We welcome feedback to help us continually improve all areas of our services so that we remain a first class provider of supported housing.

There are a number of ways you can provide feedback including: Repair Satisfaction Slips, Feedback Cards, Tenant Forums, Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and through our Tenant Quality Team (see below).

Making a complaint

If you are not satisfied with the service you receive, or consider the issue to be of a more serious nature, you can raise a formal complaint by writing to us at our office or by calling Housing Management on 01273 405 800.

If you make a formal complaint, we will follow an agreed process with set timescales in which we will respond to you.

Your complaint will be treated in confidence and only discussed with people who need to know. You will not be treated unfairly if you make a complaint and it will not affect the quality of service you receive in the future.

Tenant Quality Team (TQT)

Our Tenant Quality Team (TQT) plays an important part in finding out tenants' views on the services we provide.

The TQT is made up of Southdown tenants who volunteer their time to meet regularly to review our activities and services. The team are always looking for new members to join. Relevant training and support is provided to all our TQT members, as well as a professional reference.

Getting involved

To help us develop our services to be the best they can be, we want to hear from as many of our tenants as we can about what you value most and how we can meet your needs.

We realise that not everyone wants to or feels able to make the commitment to become a member of our TQT. We want to encourage all residents to get involved and to share their opinions and experiences of our service in a way which they are comfortable with. If you are happy to be consulted on individual issues, without the need to attend meetings please get in touch with us so we can discuss how you would like to get involved. Email us at housing@southdown.org or call 01273 405 800 and ask to speak to the Housing Management team.

Resident feedback directory

To make it as simple as possible to share feedback, an idea we are developing is the creation of a Resident Feedback Directory.

This will be a list detailing how you'd prefer to be contacted so that we can easily get in touch with you to gather your input on letters, services or for feedback on your experiences. There is no obligation to participate in every project so it is a good way to get involved without any commitment.

The directory will only be used by Southdown for the purposes of gathering tenant feedback and your details will not be shared with anyone else. You can request to be taken off the directory at any time. Please do get in touch if you would like to get involved.



If you're interested in joining our Tenant Quality Team (TQT) or would like more information about the Resident Feedback Directory please get in touch. Email housing@southdown.org, call 01273 405 800 or speak to your Housing Officer.



Plans for 2019-20

Tenants move into our new Southdown Court supported living service in Brighton for adults with learning disabilities.

The first tenants moved into our newly developed Supported Living service - six self contained flats - in Brighton in late September 2019.

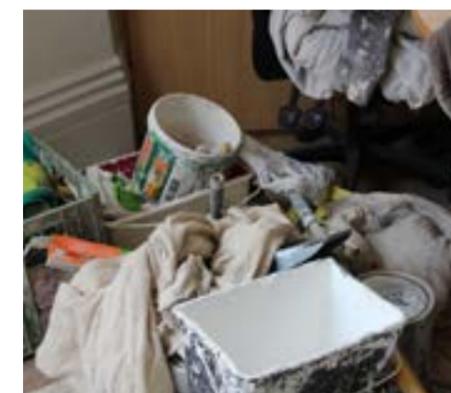
Our Learning Disability Division is busy working on transition plans to help the new tenants move as smoothly as possible from their existing accommodation.



Responsive repairs

2019-20 will see our Property Services Manager working on re-tendering our Responsive Repairs Contract when the current contract comes to an end (lease holders will receive formal notification of this late 2019).

The re-tendering exercise will involve us closely scrutinising all aspects of the tenders we receive to ensure that the successful contractor meets our high expectations for meeting tenants' needs.



Stock condition survey

Our Property Services team will be undertaking a programme of Stock Condition Surveys in 2019-20 to help us plan more effectively for works that will be needed in future years to keep our housing stock in good condition.

The Stock Condition Surveys will help us to spread the cost of major planned works across the years and to more effectively identify what our key maintenance priorities are in the years ahead.



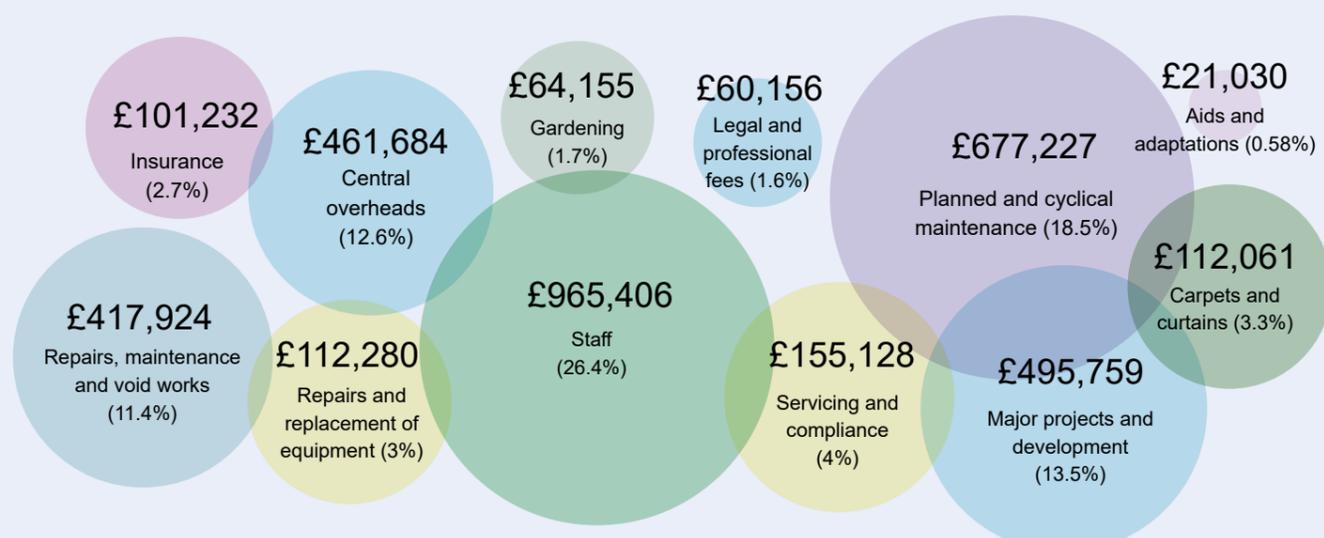
Value for Money how we spend our housing-related income

Value for Money, for us, does not 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.

Our Housing Division is the second largest area of spending for Southdown with an annual budget of around £3 million in 2018/19.

We continually review the money we spend on our housing and property activities and aim to achieve year-on year improvements, both in terms of quality and costs.

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





Meet the team

Whether you are reporting a repair or talking about your rent it is always nice to know who is on the other end of the phone. Meet the team and find out who's who in our Housing Division.

About us

All Southdown tenants have a dedicated Housing Officer who oversees each tenancy and provides support as needed. Housing Officers ensure that rent is paid, that tenants' concerns are responded to and that the conditions of each tenancy are adhered to.

Our Property Services team oversee all aspects of property maintenance and development. This includes day-to-day and emergency repairs, refurbishments and property safety checks.

Our Housing team oversee delivery of our tenant involvement and tenant support services including financial inclusion advice.

The team also oversee our Housing Division's systems, which support the smooth delivery of our services to our tenants.

Our Director of Housing leads on development of new opportunities to provide affordable supported housing for vulnerable people, as well as oversees the Housing Division as a whole.

Changes to your Housing Management team

As funding for external support services continues to be cut, our Housing Management team has come under increasing pressure to provide additional support for tenants with challenging issues who have historically received support from other agencies.

In 2018-19, we took a close look at these challenges and how we could best tackle them. In response, we re-shaped our team.

We have discontinued the Tenancy Sustainment Service and instead replaced and expanded the resource with the creation of three new Housing Assistant posts to complement the Housing Assistant post we already have in Brighton.

Our Housing Assistants will help tenants to sustain their tenancies by early intervention to tackle low level arrears, oversee action plans to de-clutter homes that are a concern and support Housing Officers to deal with low level anti-social behaviour. In addition, they will carry out more regular property and block inspections as well as continue to undertake annual tenant visits.

We hope these new posts will make the Housing Management team more visible and accessible to you.

Introducing your Housing Assistants...

In Brighton, some of you may already know our Housing Assistant, **Ross Kirkham**, who has proved to be a real asset to the team since he started in early 2019.



In East Sussex, we have **Jackie Watts**. Jackie has worked with Southdown for many years in our Home Works homelessness prevention service and more recently as a Tenancy Sustainment Officer. Jackie will be working alongside Housing Officer, Sarah Cager.



In coastal West Sussex (Worthing and Chichester), we have **Becky White**, who will work alongside Housing Officers' Keith Robinson and Sandra Carter. Becky has experience in private lettings and is keen to do what she can to help make a difference to the lives of our tenants.



In Crawley and Horsham, we are recruiting for a Housing Assistant who will work alongside Housing Officer, Simon Betts.

Introducing Gemma, your Supported Living Partnership Manager...

In last year's Satisfaction Survey many of our Supported Living tenants told us that they were not clear about who their Housing Officer is so we wanted to introduce you to Gemma Buckley, our Supported Living Partnership Officer.

Gemma is the equivalent of a Housing Officer but works specifically with tenants in our Supported Living properties.

Gemma has been in post since August 2018 and is out and about a lot visiting tenants in their properties and liaising with support staff and families.

Gemma says...

"My first job of the day is to check my emails and respond as necessary and also check my calendar to see what I have planned for that day. Each day is different really and I never know what might come my way.

Rent management, dealing with anti-social behaviour, taking and responding to queries from tenants/service managers/tenant's families, visiting tenants in their homes, meeting with tenants to sign a new tenancy agreement with Southdown,



liaising with various departments within Southdown to ensure that we all work in partnership and deliver a good overall service to all our tenants.

My favourite part of my job is definitely going out and about to visit my Supported Living services. I enjoy meeting and talking to Service Managers and support staff, the families of tenants but most of all, the tenants themselves. I feel that it's important to have that face to face contact and interactions with individuals, so that they know who I am and can feel comfortable about contacting me should they need to. This also helps me to understand the individual needs of tenants and be able to work with and communicate with people according to their individual needs."

Your Housing Officers are:

East Sussex



Sarah Cager

Crawley and Horsham



Simon Betts

Chichester District, Worthing, Shoreham & West Hove



Sandra Carter (Tues-Fri)



Keith Robinson (Mon-Weds)

Job share

Brighton & Hove

We are currently in the process of recruiting a Housing Officer for Brighton and Hove.

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)

