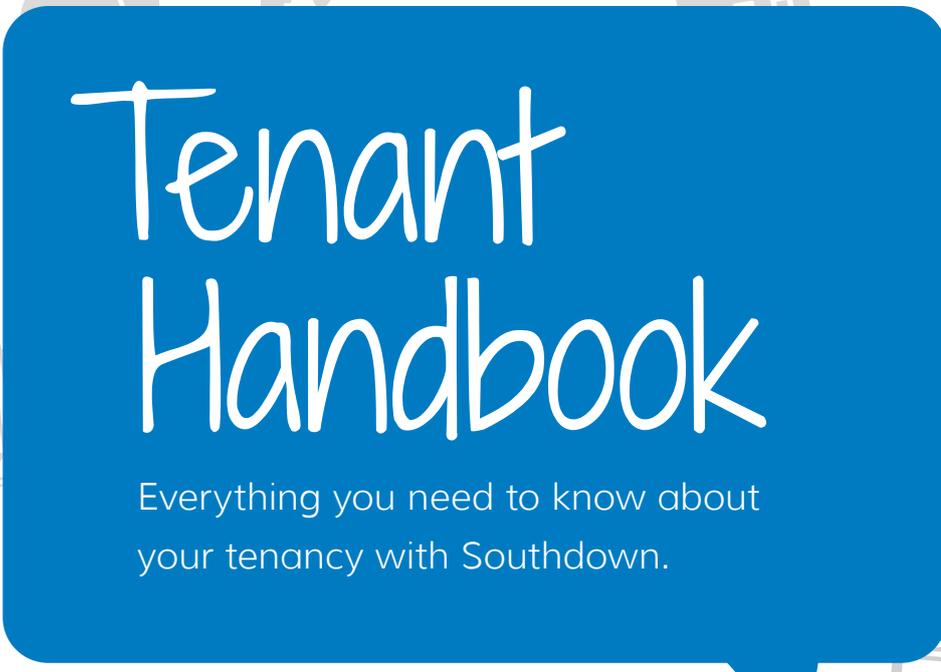




Southdown

Making Life Work



Tenant Handbook

Everything you need to know about
your tenancy with Southdown.

Providing specialist housing,
care and support in Sussex since 1972

www.southdown.org

Welcome

The Tenant Quality Team (TQT) is delighted to welcome you to your new tenancy with Southdown. We are a team of Southdown tenants who volunteer to help fellow tenants share their thoughts and experiences of the organisation's housing management and property services.

We hope you like it in your new home and that it changes your life for the better, as it has ours.

Moving into your own home is a big step to take but Southdown is there to help you along the way. There is lots of useful information in this Tenant Handbook and your Housing Officer is always on hand to speak to whenever you need to.

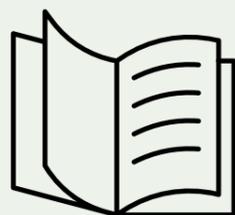
As you settle into your new home, if you would like to be involved in helping Southdown be the best landlord it can be, please get in touch. The TQT is a friendly team and we are keen to expand. You can read more about us on page 7 or call 01273 405 800.

Wishing you well in your new home with Southdown.

The TQT.



How to use this handbook



This handbook is not a legal document but contains important information to help you understand your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. It also contains information on what you can expect from Southdown.

If you need a copy of this handbook in another language or format, call 01273 405 800 or email housing@southdown.org.

Reporting a repair



Where Southdown is responsible for repairs:

To report a repair call our Property Services team on 01273 898 744.

If an emergency or urgent repair is needed overnight, at weekends or on bank holidays call our 24 hour service on 01323 636 202.

Tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing can contact this service via fax on 01323 636 398.

Where repairs are not Southdown's responsibility, your Housing Officer will provide you with contact details.

Contents

1. About us and how to get in touch	3
2. Your tenancy	4
Tenancy agreement	4
What you can expect from Southdown	4
What we expect from you	4
Ending your tenancy	5
3. Tenants' Charter	6
4. Have your say	7
Making a formal complaint	7
Feedback	7
Consultation	7
Tenant Quality Team	7
5. Money Matters	8
Paying your rent	8
What your rent pays for	8
Difficulty paying your rent?	9
Universal Credit	9
6. Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment & Adult Protection	10
What is anti-social behaviour (ASB)?	10
Our ASB standards	11
Harassment, Adult Protection and Domestic Abuse	11
7. Other tenancy matters	13
Pets	13
Smoking	13
Transfers	13
8. Repairs and Maintenance	15
Reporting repairs to Southdown	15
What are Southdown's repairing responsibilities?	16
What are tenants' responsibilities?	16
Access for repairs	16
How long will I wait for my repair?	17
Compensation	17
Improvements	17
Recharges	17
9. Guide to Condensation	18
10. Safety	19
Property Safety Checks	19
Fire safety	19
Security at home	20
11. Privacy	21
12. Confidentiality and Data Protection	22



"I hope you find your Tenant Handbook useful but if you have a query or concern about your tenancy or property that we have not covered, please get in contact with your Housing Officer."

Sarah Murphy

HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES
SENIOR MANAGER

01 About us and how to get in touch



About us

We are the largest not-for-profit provider of specialist housing, care and support for vulnerable people across Sussex.

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

Established in 1972, we are a specialist housing association and exist for the benefit of local communities. As a not-for-profit organisation, any money we make from rents is reinvested in the management, maintenance and development of housing.

We are a registered provider with the Regulator of Social Housing (L1829).

How to contact us

To provide feedback or for general enquiries, please speak to your Housing Officer or you can contact us using the details below.

Head Office in Lewes: 01273 405 800
2 Bell Lane, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1JU

Worthing Office: 01903 867 320
Caravelle House, 17-19 Goring Road,
Worthing, West Sussex, BN12 1AP

Preston Park: 01273 545 049
18 Preston Park Avenue, Brighton, East
Sussex, BN1 6HL

Office opening hours
9am-5pm, Monday to Thursdays
9am-4:30pm, Fridays
Visitors by appointment only

02 Your Tenancy



Tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement is an important legal document between you and Southdown. It contains details of your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Please read it carefully and keep it in a safe place.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you keep to the terms of the tenancy as, by signing it, you have legally agreed to do so.



What you can expect from Southdown

- You have the right to privacy and respect for the way you live, as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others.
- The right to be safe and free from harassment.
- The right to safe and well-maintained housing, and for repairs to be carried out within a reasonable timescale
- The right to be given information about your rent and other housing management issues.
- The right not to be evicted without a court order.

What we expect from you

- To pay your rent regularly and on time.
- To keep your home, including a garden (where applicable), in good condition.
- To live in your property and not let anyone else move in with you without our permission, including not taking in lodgers or subletting any part of your home.
- To be considerate to your neighbours.
- For you and your visitors to behave in a way that does not cause a nuisance or harassment to others.
- To take responsibility for your visitors.
- To report repairs promptly and give access to contractors and our staff following reasonable notice.
- To take responsibility for your house keys and arrange for a spare set to be kept by a named and trusted key holder.
- Not to use your home for illegal or immoral purposes.

03 Tenants' Charter



Ending your tenancy

If you decide to end your tenancy you need to:

- provide at least 4 full weeks' notice in writing, ending on a Sunday. You should ask your Housing Officer to send you a Termination of Tenancy form to fill out and return to us.
- allow us access to inspect your home before your tenancy ends
- ensure your keys (including meter keys) are returned
- ensure the property is left in a good and clean condition and cleared of all your belongings and rubbish.
- ensure you have made arrangements to clear any rent arrears or recharges that you owe to Southdown

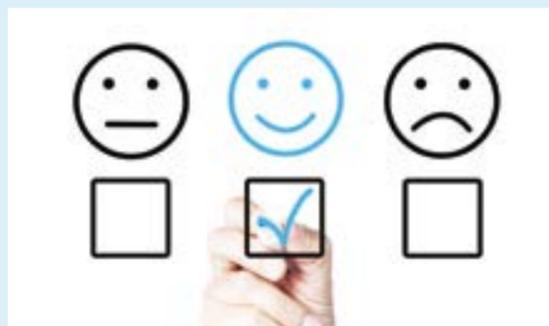
If the property is not left clean and cleared, Southdown have the right to recharge you for the cost of cleaning the property and clearing any items left behind.

It is our usual practice to issue a 7 day tort notice if you leave possessions in the property after your tenancy has ended. A tort notice allows us to sell or dispose of your possessions without your consent following the 7 day period.



Share your 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 page 7 for more information.



Equalities and Diversity:

Southdown is committed to challenging prejudice, and values the diversity of people from all sections of society. Allocation of housing is based on your housing and support needs. We are committed to ensuring that all our tenants feel welcome and are not discriminated against or treated unfairly. All cases of harassment will be taken seriously and dealt with through our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.



Housing Officers and Housing Assistants:

We will provide a named Housing Officer and Housing Assistant for all tenants to speak to about any issues they may be having. This is in addition to any other support tenants receive from us.



Anti-Social Behaviour:

We will respond promptly to all reports of ASB. Serious abuse or threats of abuse with violence including domestic abuse, hate crime, sexual offences, assault, arson, gang crime or weapons will be responded to within 24 hours. Other causes of ASB will be responded to within 5 working days. We offer home visits to all tenants making complaints and communicate what action we are taking to help resolve the issue.



Annual Visits:

We offer an annual visit to all tenants and shared owners. The purpose of the visit is to check how you are getting on and to check that we are happy with the condition of the property.



Tenant Involvement:

Tenants will be provided with twice yearly themed tenant focus groups and an annual tenant survey to provide feedback on how we have performed. Tenants can also become involved in our Tenant Quality Team (see page 8).



Property Inspections:

Tenants will be notified of inspections of common areas. They will be provided with opportunities to attend or provide feedback of any concerns they have regarding 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:

Southdown will post-inspect at least 10% 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:

Where Southdown are responsible for repairs, tenants will be offered three choices of appointment times for repairs.



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. Our out-of-hours number is: **01323 636 202**.

Where Southdown are not responsible for repairs, we will endeavour to provide tenants with an out of hour's number for the repairs service operated by the head landlord.

04 Have Your Say



Making a formal 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 405800. 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.

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.

Consultation

We consult with tenants where a change is proposed that substantially affects the management and maintenance of their home. Tenant's views will be taken into account before any final decisions are made. The results of consultation and the decisions that follow will be reported to any tenants who are affected.

Tenant Quality Team

The Tenant Quality Team (TQT) plays an important part in finding out tenants' views of the services we provide. For example, feedback on our repairs service and the service provided by Housing Officers. The team also give feedback on documents and information we provide, including the letters we send you and this Tenant Handbook.

The TQT meet regularly and are always looking for new members to help improve services. Relevant training and support is provided to the volunteers on the team and you will receive a professional reference at the end of your volunteering. **If you are interested in applying to join the team, please speak to your Housing Officer or contact Housing Management on 01273 405800.**



05 Money Matters



Paying your rent

Paying your rent is important as, if you do not pay your rent, you may lose your home.

At the start of your tenancy, you will receive a rent payment card. You can use this to make payments at Post Offices and shops displaying the PayPoint logo or online at www.allpayments.net. You will need to enter your rent payment card number, password, debit card number and amount you want to pay and your rent account is credited within 24 hours. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Please keep your rent payment card safe. If it is lost or stolen, replacements can be ordered by contacting your Housing Officer.



If you choose to pay us by standing order please put a reference on your payment that states your tenancy number followed by your surname. For example: '12345 Smith'.

Your tenancy requires you to pay your rent one week in advance, but we appreciate you may not be able to afford to do this straight away. We would encourage all residents to pay an additional amount each week to start building credit, even if this is only £1 or £2 per week. Your Housing Officer will talk to you about the ways you can pay your rent and build up one weeks' credit on your account.



What your rent pays for

Your rent pays for the management and maintenance of your home. You may also pay service charges to meet the costs of any utility bills, furnishings and equipment provided by Southdown as your landlord.

We review rents and service charges each year, with changes usually taking effect in early April. We will give you at least four weeks' notice of any changes. If you are receiving Universal Credit for your Housing Costs then you will need to notify Universal Credit each April to confirm your new rent. For residents on Housing Benefit, this information is automatically sent by Southdown to the Housing Benefit Department.

You will receive a rent statement four times a year, but can ask for your balance at any time by contacting your Housing Officer to request a statement.

Recharges

You may be recharged by us if we are required to undertake repairs which have become necessary because of damage or neglect caused by you. These recharges will be held on a sub-account, separate to your rent account. In addition you may be recharged court costs if it has become necessary for any reason for us to apply to court against you. These court costs will also be held on a different sub-account.

Where you owe us recharges or court costs but have a credit balance on your rent account, we will transfer any credit over into your other sub-accounts in order to pay off first any outstanding court costs and then any outstanding recharges.

06 Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment & Adult Protection



Difficulty paying your rent?

If you are having difficulty paying your rent, please let your Housing Officer know as soon as possible. Your Housing Officer can set up a repayment plan and put you in touch with specialist advisors who can provide Welfare Benefit checks and budgeting help.

It is important to pay your rent to avoid legal action. If legal action has started you may be able to put this on hold if you:

- Pay the rent that you owe as soon as possible
- Contact your Housing Officer
- Sign an agreement to repay your arrears through regular affordable payments
- Keep to this agreement by paying your rent plus the agreed arrears amount

You may be entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover all or some of your housing costs if you are on a low income. If you need to claim, your Housing Officer can help you to fill in forms or to arrange for someone to help you.

Universal Credit

If you have been told that you need to apply for Universal Credit please make contact with your Housing Officer to discuss this. Because of changes to Welfare Benefits, it may be beneficial for some people to remain on Housing Benefit and other "legacy benefits" for as long as possible. Our Housing Officers and our Financial Inclusion Officer are able to offer you advice and support on whether to claim Universal Credit.

Things you can do to prepare for Universal Credit include:

- Setting up and using an email account
- Setting up a current account at the bank if you do not currently have one

If you would like assistance with either of these things then please speak to your Floating Support Officer, if you have one, or to your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant.



Pictured: One of Southdown's Financial Inclusion Officers

Anti-Social Behaviour

Southdown will not tolerate any form of Anti -Social Behaviour (ASB). We aim to provide a balanced approach that addresses ASB whilst supporting tenants to maintain their tenancy.

Any action we take will be reasonable and proportionate.

Unless the ASB is serious, we will aim to stop the behaviour by providing warnings and support to address the problem.

If the ASB continues, Southdown may take legal action which could lead to eviction.

What is anti-social and illegal behaviour (ASB)?

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 defines "anti-social behaviour" as:

- Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person
- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises or
- Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person

Southdown will aim to tackle anti-social behaviour which directly or indirectly relates to or affects our housing management functions.

Some examples of ASB include:

- Intimidation and harassment
- Aggressive and threatening language and behaviour
- Using housing accommodation to sell drugs, or for other unlawful purposes
- Noise nuisance
- Actual violence against people and property (including domestic violence)
- Hate behaviour that targets members of identified groups because of their perceived differences
- Uncontrolled pets
- Criminal damage (including graffiti and vandalism)
- Obstructing communal areas

What is not ASB?

Although we recognise that the following things may cause you annoyance, they cannot be dealt with by Southdown as Anti-Social Behaviour as they do not constitute a breach of tenancy:

- Smoking outside of blocks
- Household noise such as a washing machine or vacuum cleaner during reasonable hours
- Children playing
- Parking in front of another tenant's home unless this is blocking access.
- Cooking smells
- Facebook comments (except where comments evidence a pattern of harassment).

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other things which are annoying but not a breach of tenancy. We will discuss this with you if this is the case.

Our ASB standards

- We will respond promptly to all reports of ASB. Serious abuse or threats of abuse with violence including domestic abuse, hate crime, sexual offences, assault, arson, gang crime or weapons will be responded to **within 24 hours**. Other types of ASB will be responded to **within 5 working days**.
- We will treat all complaints impartially and maintain confidentiality at all times.
- We will support and advise complainants, victims and witnesses of ASB throughout the case.
- We will take full account of the impact of the ASB on the complainant and wider community.
- We will work with other agencies including local authorities, police, voluntary agencies and residents to ensure we maintain a proactive and effective role in local crime and disorder strategies.

Preventing ASB

We will aim to prevent ASB by:

- publicising acceptable standards of behaviour,
- reviewing and monitoring actions we take,
- increased levels of support to potential victims and perpetrators,
- referral to specialist agencies or programmes e.g. anger management courses,
- working in partnership with the Police, Mental Health teams and other professionals,
- early intervention by Southdown staff or other mediation services where appropriate

Harassment

Harassment can be verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, graffiti, damage to property and physical assault. It is different from other incidents of nuisance because it is based on prejudices against race, colour, disability, gender identity or sexuality.

Anyone who feels that they have been a victim of this kind of harassment should report the incident to us at once. Southdown will take action where there is evidence that a perpetrator is harassing our tenants or staff. If it is a criminal matter, we will also report the incident to the Police.

Adult Protection

Many tenants living in Southdown's properties are defined as Vulnerable Adults who need a greater level of protection from abuse and exploitation.

Abuse can take many forms but typically falls under the categories of physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial and discriminatory. Domestic abuse is a broader term which encompasses one or more of these elements where the perpetrator is the intimate partner of, former partner of or relative of the person suffering the abuse. Abuse may also include neglect.

Physical abuse

- Pushing, shaking, pinching
- Slapping and hitting
- Inappropriate restraint
- Authorizing changes to a person's life without their consent

Adult Protection (cont.)

Sexual abuse

- Rape, sexual assault and pressuring someone into sexual acts they don't understand or feel powerless to refuse

Emotional abuse

- Calling someone names
- Belittling, ridiculing or bullying
- Isolating, taking away someone's privacy or threatening to abandon them

Psychological abuse

- Making someone feel that they are going mad
- Playing mind games
- Making someone feel guilty
- Telling someone they are responsible for the abuse being done to them

Financial abuse

- Theft, fraud
- Misuse of property, possessions or benefits

Neglect

- Withholding food, drink and adequate heating
- Failure to provide access to health, social and education services

Discriminatory abuse

- Insults, harassment and maltreatment because of someone's race, impairment or illness

It is always important to report any abusive behaviour to your Housing Officer. Your Housing Officer will work with you to prevent further instances of abuse. Whilst your Housing Officer will always try to maintain confidentiality where this is your

wish, if they believe there is a serious risk to you or someone else then they may be obligated to report a safeguarding concern to the Local Authority.

Domestic Abuse

Southdown takes reports of domestic abuse very seriously. Whilst we may not have a duty to provide alternative accommodation to a person suffering from domestic abuse, we will do everything in our power to support those who are suffering at the hands of their partner or another family member. Southdown can assist by making your property more secure, supporting you to access specialist help from domestic abuse services, supporting you to approach the local authority for alternative accommodation or in some instances with obtaining an injunction to protect you from the perpetrator.

Domestic abuse can take many forms, including physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse. It also includes forced marriage. We are here to listen to you in a non-judgemental way and to discuss how we can offer the support you want.

If you are concerned that another Southdown resident is the victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse, you should report your concerns to your Housing Officer.



07 Other Tenancy Matters

Pets



You are not allowed to keep a pet unless specific permission is granted, including permission from the head landlord where this is required. Please do not get any pet until permission is granted.

If you are given permission to keep a pet you will be asked to enter into a Pet Owning Contract. This includes the name, address and phone numbers of two people who would be able to care for your pet if you were no longer able to do so.

Permission may be withdrawn if your pet is neglected or causes a nuisance. Examples of this are excessive noise, aggression, fouling or property damage.

We must ask that you do not install a cat flap without discussing this with our Property Services team first. This is because putting a hole in your front door can mean it is no longer considered to be a fire door and that it no longer meets fire regulations.

You may be recharged for the replacement of a fire door which has been compromised by the installation of a cat flap.

Please put your pet in another room during a visit from Southdown staff or contractors.



Transfers



We are only able to directly transfer tenants within our own housing stock (i.e. where we own the properties or hold them on long leases).

Transfers may be considered when a tenant has an ongoing support need and:

- Needs a greater level of support than can be provided at their current home.
- Wants to move to be near friends, family, college or work.
- The property is no longer suitable for their physical or emotional needs.
- The transfer would help to resolve a neighbour dispute.

To request a transfer, please write to your Housing Officer to explain the reasons for your request and your particular accommodation needs. You will be informed of the outcome of your transfer application **within 28 days** and if your application is declined, you will be informed of your right to appeal.

A transfer will not usually be possible if:

- You have rent arrears.
- You are perpetrating harassment, anti-social or illegal behaviour

Smoking

Smoking is a serious cause of health problems, both for smokers and for those breathing other people's smoke. Smoking in communal areas is not allowed under the National Smoke-Free Legislation. Smoking can also be a breach of your tenancy if it causes a risk to health and safety or if it causes your property to fall into an unacceptable condition.

Emergency transfer requests

An emergency transfer request may occur for some of the following reasons;

- Serious harassment by a neighbour
- Witness to illegal activity which places tenant at risk and there has been police involvement
- Serious damage to the property through fire, flood, etc.
- Victim of domestic violence
- Any other incidents that makes the tenant very vulnerable either physically or mentally

In these circumstances, Southdown may not have the ultimate duty to provide alternative accommodation but will support tenants to be assessed for temporary housing by the Local Authority.

In circumstances where we may be able to facilitate an emergency internal transfer we will normally require written support from an external agency confirming that a transfer is essential to ensure the safety of the tenant.



08 Repairs and Maintenance



We are committed to providing housing that is in a good state of repair.

Southdown is not always responsible for the repair service for its tenants as some of our properties are leased from other landlords.

You will find **Maintenance Reporting Fact Sheets** included in your tenancy pack, which will give you all the relevant numbers, should you need to report a repair. If you cannot find these, please contact your Housing Officer who will provide you with the correct contact details to report a repair.



Reporting repairs to Southdown

To report a repair call our Property Services team on **01273 898 744** or email property.services@southdown.org. If an emergency or urgent repair is needed overnight, at weekends or on bank holidays call our 24 hour service on **01323 636 202**. Tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing can contact this service via fax on **01323 636 398**.

When reporting a repair, please give as much information as possible. For example,

- Your full address.
- What the problem is.
- Where is it (which room and floor)?
- What you think might have caused it.
- Is there an immediate risk to health and safety?
- Provide as much detail as possible, e.g. type/make or model of faulty part, colour, materials, and approximate dimensions.
- Access details - when is it most convenient for the contractor to visit?
- Pictures of the problem if you are reporting the repair by email.

What happens next?

We will log your repair and arrange for one of our approved contractors to contact you as soon as possible to arrange for the repair work to be done. For more complicated jobs we may arrange a visit to look at the problem and work out the most effective way of fixing it.

What are Southdown's repairing responsibilities?

Where we are fully responsible for repairs, we will keep the following in good repair and proper working order:

- The structure and exterior of your home.
- The installations supplied by us for water heating, space heating, sanitation, supply of gas, water and electricity, with the exception of power cuts and burst gas/ water mains.
- Any common entrances, halls, stairways, lifts, entry phones.
- Any furniture or fittings provided by Southdown.

What are tenants' responsibilities?

- Repairs or re-decoration due to misuse, neglect or damage by you or your visitors.
- Repairs to any equipment or belongings
- Replacement of lost keys.
- Keeping your home reasonably clean, tidy and in a good decorative order.
- Keeping the garden tidy where there is one.
- Reporting repairs and allowing us access to carry out repairs and maintenance work.
- Replacing toilet seats, plugs on appliances, electrical bulbs and fuses, sink & bath plugs, and smoke alarm batteries.
- Clearing blocked sinks and toilets.
- Cleaning, de-scaling and disinfecting all shower heads regularly.

This list is for guidance only and you can speak to your Housing Officer if you have any queries.

Access for repairs

It is your responsibility to provide access to contractors to carry out repairs. If you are not available for an appointment you must give **at least 24 hours' notice**, or you can be recharged for the missed appointment.

If for any reason you cannot wait in, you should either contact the contractor to make a new appointment, contact the Property Services Department on 01273 898 744, or email property.services@southdown.org to let them know that you need to cancel.

Southdown staff will not wait for contractors on your behalf.

In addition to being home for your appointment, we also expect that you make reasonable efforts to keep the area surrounding the repair, clean and clear of obstructions. In some circumstances where a property is in a particularly bad state of hygiene, our contractors may refuse to carry out the works.

09 Guide to Condensation



How long will I wait for my repair?

Where Southdown are responsible for repairs, we aim to achieve the following target times.

PRIORITY 1

Emergency Repairs – 24 hours

Any repair which is required to avoid an immediate danger to the safety of people or to prevent serious damage to the building.

Examples of an emergency repair would be:

- Blocked drains
- Total loss of electrical power
- Burst pipes
- Door and window repairs where security is at risk
- Dangerous structures
- Gas Leaks
- Total loss of heating
- Blocked toilet(s) where the tenant is unable to clear the blockage and there are no other working toilets available

PRIORITY 2

Urgent Repairs – 7 days

Repairs which affect the comfort of the tenant(s) or which are necessary for the re-letting of the property.

Examples of urgent repairs would be:

- Blocked sinks if the tenant is unable to clear the blockage
- Faulty communal TV aerial
- Minor electrical faults

PRIORITY 3

Routine Repairs - 28 working days

Routine repairs are all other repairs that do not fall into the emergency or urgent categories. However, in certain circumstances it may be more cost-effective to group some non-urgent repairs together. In these cases, we will keep you informed of the date of the repairs.

Where Southdown are not responsible for repairs, your Housing Officer will provide you with information on the landlord's target times and contact details to report repairs. Where you are not getting an adequate response from the head landlord, please let us know as we may be able to raise the issue on your behalf.

Compensation

If Southdown fails to carry out repairs in good time, your personal belongings are damaged or you have to move out because of repairs to your home, you may be eligible for compensation. The compensation policy gives you more details about this and is available on request.

Improvements

You must request written permission before carrying out any type of improvement or alteration to your home.

To apply for permission, you will need to tell us details of the work you want to be carried out and who will be doing the work.

If your property is leased, permission will need to be obtained from the head landlord. Your Housing Officer can tell you how to do this.

Recharges

Southdown will recharge tenants for repairs, replacements or clearance works required that are the responsibility of the tenant. Examples include:

- Tenant damage
- Repairs due to tenant misuse (for example, non-flushable items blocking toilets and drains)
- Missed appointments with contractors
- Replacement keys

A certain amount of condensation is to be expected in every home however it can become a problem if the moisture builds up and leads to mould growth.

You can help to prevent condensation in your home by taking some simple steps:

- Wipe down windows and sills when there is condensation on them. Remember not to dry the cloth on a radiator afterwards as this simply puts the moisture back into the room.
- Ventilate your home where possible by opening the windows for a small amount of time each day. This is especially important in the kitchen whilst cooking and in the bathroom after a bath or shower to help the excess moisture escape.
- Use extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom if you have them. Keep bathroom and kitchen doors closed until any excess moisture has been transferred outside through open windows or ventilation systems.
- Keep lids on pots and pans whilst cooking to keep the moisture contained.
- Try to keep your home at a constant temperature of around 15 degrees or higher, especially at night.
- Dry your clothes outside where possible.
- Where possible leave a small gap between your furniture and the walls to allow better air circulation.





10 Safety

Property Safety Checks

We have a legal responsibility to inspect all gas appliances provided by Southdown each year. We also need to carry out other checks such as portable electrical equipment, fire alarms and water quality. We will give you notice of when these checks will take place. It is important for your own safety and that of others in the building that you keep these appointments.

Southdown keeps records of safety checks and you have the right to inspect these records. Speak to your Housing Officer if you want to do this.

Fire Alarms

It is vital that residents do not silence fire alarms in their block even where they believe them to be false alarms. This can be incredibly dangerous because residents are not able to undertake a full check of the building to ensure that there is no fire and that the alarm is indeed a false one. Residents risk taking on personal liability for any injury or damage which occurred as a result of a real fire which went undetected because of tampering with the fire alarm. Southdown will look to take enforcement action against any resident found to have tampered with the fire alarm.



Fire safety

The safety of our tenants is our highest priority. To keep your home safe, we maintain fire risk assessments. When we carry out communal area inspections, we check that fire equipment is not damaged and that there are no fire risks in the communal areas.

If you live in one of our Registered Care schemes or a Supported Living scheme with 24 hour on-site staff then the service manager must ensure that an assessment is done to see whether a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is required. PEEPs are required where we think you are likely to have difficulty evacuating in the event of a fire. If you are assessed as being sufficiently able to evacuate in the event of a fire then you will not need a PEEP. If you do not have a PEEP and think you should have one or are unclear about what to do in the event of a fire, please speak to your support worker or the on-site Service Manager.

If you live in a Supported Living Scheme that isn't staffed 24 hours a day there should be a Fire Evacuation Plan for your building. These will be on the noticeboard by your front door. Make sure you familiarise yourself with this.

If you live in Supported Housing or are on the Independent Living Scheme then you should evacuate the building, provided it is safe to do so, and call the fire brigade. If you feel that you would have trouble evacuating in the event of a fire then please discuss this further with your Housing Officer. If you are not able to evacuate in the event of an emergency then we will need to assess what aids and adaptations you may require to assist you. In some instances if you are unable to evacuate we may need to consider whether the accommodation is right for you.

Keeping communal areas clear

Communal staircases and corridors must be kept clear of items such as prams, bicycles, plant pots, mats and rubbish. These items can stop people evacuating the building quickly and also help fire to spread. We may remove and dispose of items left in communal areas. We will always give you notice of our intention to do this to allow you time to find somewhere else to store your items.

Security at Home

Keep safe in your home

- Take care when cooking.
- Put cigarettes out properly.
- Take care with candles.
- Don't overload plug sockets.
- Keep plug sockets and wiring clear as they may overheat.
- Provide access to our staff to check your home is safe. They can arrange for a free home safety check and smoke alarm from the local fire service.
- The door closers on fire doors are an important part of protection against fire risk. The door closer should be strong enough to close the door fully into the frame from any open position. It should be able to overcome the resistance of the door latch and edge seals. It is really important that you notify us straight away if you notice a problem with your door closer.

Insurance

Southdown or the Head Landlord insure the structure of your home but you are responsible for insuring the contents. We strongly advise that you arrange insurance. If you need support with searching for insurance, please speak to your Housing Officer.

Your security

It is important to keep your home safe and secure:

- Always lock your door and fasten all your windows when you go out, even if it is only for a few minutes. Most burglaries happen during the day time and more thieves break in through windows than through doors.
- Never leave cash or valuables lying around.
- Never let people in you don't know. Always ask for proof of ID.
- Never leave a key 'hidden' outside – thieves know all the hiding places.
- When you go out in the evening, close the curtains and leave a light on in a room (not the hall).

Callers you do not know

- If you have a door chain and spy hole, use them to help you to identify callers. Use your intercom system if you have one.
- If it is someone you don't know, always ask for proof of identity and keep them waiting outside until you have checked their identity. Southdown staff and our Contractors always carry identification cards. The card should include a photograph of the holder and the name of the organisation.
- If you are at all suspicious, phone the organisation they say they are from to check and phone the police if necessary.

11 Privacy



Tenants have a right to privacy and security but there are certain circumstances when people working on behalf of Southdown need to come into your home:

- To gain access to communal areas to test fire alarms, empty pay phones, carry out Health and Safety checks etc.
- To gain access to carry out repairs, inspection works, maintenance and safety inspections, e.g. gas safety checks. We will give you a minimum of 24 hours' notice unless it is an emergency when we will require immediate access.
- To carry out an annual tenancy visit or to inspect the condition of your property
- Please let us know if you are going to be on holiday or away from the property for more than two weeks. We will only gain access to your accommodation without your permission in an emergency. Routine repairs and inspections will remain on hold until you get back.



12 Confidentiality and Data Protection



We are committed to making sure that any personal information you provide remains confidential to you and will only be disclosed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Your personal information will only be looked at and used to help make sure we give you (and your neighbours) an effective service. This may include sharing the information across different parts of Southdown where this is necessary to ensure we give you the best possible support and to ensure we fulfill our business functions..

We may share the information with other support agencies if this would help you access other services or if we are concerned about you or someone else or where we are required to by law. We will try to discuss this with you before we share your information.

In some instances where we lease your property from a head landlord, there may be circumstances when we need to share your information with them. This will only ever be on a need-to-know basis.

More information about how Southdown stores and uses your data is available as a leaflet or on our website www.southdown.org



Southdown Housing Association

Registered Head Office

2 Bell Lane, Lewes
East Sussex, BN7 1JU

Phone: 01273 405 800

Email: info@southdown.org

www.southdown.org

 @SouthdownHA

 @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)

