

# Southdown

## Tenant Handbook

Everything you need to know about  
your tenancy with Southdown

# Welcome

**T**he Housing Management Team is delighted to welcome you to your new tenancy with Southdown. We hope you like it in your new home and that it changes your life for the better.

Moving into your own home is a big step to take but Southdown is here 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 with your designated Housing Officer.

Wishing you well in your new home with Southdown.

## 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](mailto:housing@southdown.org)**

## Reporting a repair

Where Southdown is responsible for repairs, you can report a repair by calling our Property Services team on 01273 898 744.

This phone number is available 24/7 in the event of an emergency or urgent repair.



Tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing can contact our Property Services Team by email at: [property.services@southdown.org](mailto:property.services@southdown.org)

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





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**Sarah Murphy**

HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES SENIOR MANAGER

“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.”

# 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

**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.

## 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 seven 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 seven day period. If we have to serve a tort notice because you have not cleared the property, you may also be liable to pay use and occupation charges for those additional seven days.



## 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 and Tenant Satisfaction Surveys.



See next page for more information.



# 03 Our Commitment to You



Southdown is committed to building a stronger relationship with tenants and is in the process of adopting the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Charter.

**Relationships:** We commit to treating each tenant and shared owner with respect, be open and honest in our communication, and transparent in our decision making.

**Communication:** Tenants will receive clear accessible and timely information on issues that matter to them, what we are doing as an organisation and information on our performance in key areas.

**Voice and Influence:** We commit to tenants collectively having opportunities to scrutinise the services affecting their homes.

**Accountability:** Tenants will work in partnership with us to independently scrutinise and hold us to account on decisions affecting the quality of their homes and the services we provide.

**Quality:** We commit to providing good quality homes that are well maintained, safe and well managed.

**When things go wrong:** We commit to providing residents with simple and accessible routes to raise complaints and will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.



## 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.



## 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.



## 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.



## 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. We will also use the annual visit to check the condition of your fire door.



#### **Tenant Involvement:**

We have 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 Involvement Group (see section 4).



#### **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 Emergency Repair Helpline for Properties**

Where we are responsible for repairs, we provide a free out of hours emergency repairs helpline for tenants. Our out of hours call centre will triage your call and if your repair is an emergency they will make the necessary arrangements for this to be carried out. If your repair is not an emergency they will report it to us on our next working day. Our out of hours number is the same as the daytime repairs number which is 01273 898 744.

If you are a tenant in a property owned by another head landlord (Hyde, Saxon Weald, Worthing Homes, Clarion, Home Group, Abri, A2Dominion, Lewes-Eastbourne Council, Southern Housing, Wealden District Council) then you will need to call out of hours emergency repairs through their own out of hours teams.



#### **Major Emergencies**

If you live in a block that Southdown owns or manages and there is a major emergency outside of normal office hours, you should call us on the same number, 01273 898 744.

We would define a major emergency as a serious fire, flood or major structural issue. Our out of hours call centre will triage the call and coordinate a management response from Southdown. It is important to note that if you live in a block owned by a head landlord then your head landlord is responsible for managing any out of hours emergency at your block.





# 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 contacting us:

**Via our website:** [www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/share-your-feedback/](http://www.southdown.org/how-we-help/housing/share-your-feedback/)

**Or write to us at:**  
Southdown, 2 Bell Lane, Lewes, BN7 1JU

**Or call our head office 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. You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice at any time:  
[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Or write to:**  
Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152  
Liverpool, L33 7WQ

**Or call the Ombudsman on:**  
0300 111 3000 9.15am - 5.15pm, Mon - Fri

## 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 Involvement Group

The Tenant Involvement Group 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 group also give feedback on documents and information we provide, including the Tenants Newsletter and this Tenant Handbook.

The Group meet regularly and are always looking for new members to help improve services. 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/Housing Assistant or email:  
[tenantinvolvement@southdown.org](mailto:tenantinvolvement@southdown.org)

# 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](http://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.**

## Difficulty paying your rent?

If you are having difficulty paying your rent, please let your Housing Officer know as soon as possible. Please don't bury your head in the sand and worry alone – we are here to help you get back on track. 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 Housing Officer or Housing Assistant.

**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.**





# 06 Anti-Social Behaviour, Harassment & Adult Protection

## 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 is serious and the victim is at high risk we will seek whatever legal remedies are required to keep the victim safe.

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
- 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)

## 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

### 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.

If we have to raise a safeguarding concern because we are concerned about your safety, we will seek your views on the outcome you would like and try to take into account your wishes wherever possible.



## 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

We recognise that for many people, a pet is an invaluable source of happiness and support. Pets can however cause problems in our blocks if they are not looked after and managed properly. You will need our permission before you get a pet so that we can assess each request on its own merits. We may also need to seek permission from a head landlord where we are not the direct owner of your block. Please do not get a pet until permission has been 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.

## 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.

## 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



## 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.



## Reporting repairs to Southdown

To report a repair call our Property Services team on **01273 898 744** or email [property.services@southdown.org](mailto:property.services@southdown.org).

This phone number is available 24/7 in the event of an emergency or urgent repair.

- 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 is to help prevent legionella bacteria building up. Legionella bacteria is potentially dangerous to your health.

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](mailto: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.



## 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 – 5 working 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 - 20 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

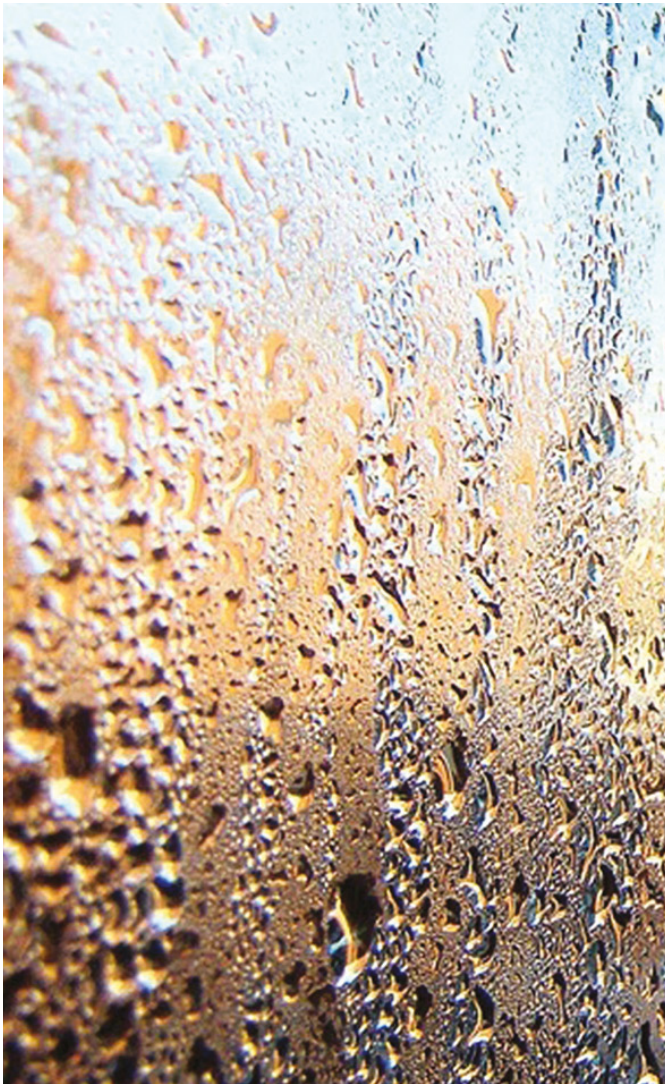


# 09 Damp, Mould & Condensation

## Damp and Mould

Damp and mould can be harmful to your health, particularly if you are vulnerable owing to age or a health condition. You should report any cases of damp and mould to us as soon as you notice them.

Please let us know when you report the issue if you are over 65, have asthma or other health conditions related to your lungs or otherwise have a compromised immune system (for example if you are undergoing treatment for cancer). This will help us to understand the severity of the issue.



## Condensation

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.

**We have a dedicated email address where you can report any fire safety concerns you have about your property or block. If you have any concerns around Fire Safety please email [firesafety@southdown.org](mailto:firesafety@southdown.org). Otherwise, if you have concerns about your ability to evacuate in the event of a fire, please speak to your Housing Officer who will arrange to undertake a Person Centred Risk Assessment with you.**

## Fire safety

Fire safety is everyone's responsibility. As your landlord we remove or reduce as much risk from fire as possible but to achieve this, we need our tenants to allow our employees and contractors access to check your home is safe and to undertake vital servicing and repairs.

In March 2023 we began an annual programme of inspections to flat front doors. Your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant will visit you once per year to undertake an annual tenant visit and to check the integrity of your flat front door. Your fire door protects not just you but other people in your building as it slows the spread of fire. Please call us straight away if you notice that your door closer is broken or missing, if the door no longer closes by itself snugly into its frame or if the door or door frame is damaged. In the event of a fire in your property, you should try to make sure the door closes behind you when you leave.

## Smoking

Smoking is a major cause of fire in the home. If you smoke, it's far safer to smoke outside where cigarette ends can be left to ensure they're extinguished before being disposed of.

If you do smoke indoors, never smoke in bed, and avoid smoking when sitting in upholstered furniture, especially if you think you might fall asleep. Never leave lit cigarettes unattended.

When you are tired, take extra care, especially if you're on prescription drugs or been drinking alcohol.

Always use proper ashtrays which won't topple over, place them only on a hard surface (not on bedding or soft furnishings) and make sure you've extinguished the stub properly, ideally in water.



When emptying ashtrays, always make sure your smoking materials are out, cold and ideally wet.

Take extra care if you use emollient creams as these increase the risk of fire.

## Candles and incense burners

Keep them away from curtains, bedding, furniture, clothes and hair, and anything else which could catch light.

Tea lights get very hot if they're not in proper holders and will melt through plastic surfaces such as your TV. They should be in heat-resistant holders where they can't be knocked over.

Make sure they're extinguished properly before you leave the room, your home or go to bed.

Finally, be especially careful if you have a lot of flammable items in your home, such as books, magazines, papers and clothes, or if you smoke or use candles.

## Cooking

As the saying goes, a watched pot never boils, but try not to leave cooking unattended, especially if you're frying, boiling or grilling.

Make sure your oven/cooker/hob is turned off fully when you finish cooking and don't place items nearby which may catch fire such as tea towels.

Use the appliance's timer function if it has one, so you are alerted once food is cooked.

Keep your oven/ cooker/ hob and cooker hood/ extractor fan clean, as a built up of fat and grease can ignite.

And finally, never put anything metal in the microwave including tinfoil.

## Electrical

Southdown tests the fixed electrical cables and wires in the walls and ceilings where you live every 5 years.

- In order to keep you and others around you safe, we ask you to:
- Make sure your electrical appliances are clean and in good working order. Check for damaged leads, plugs and sockets (especially signs of scorching) or any other damage, and if there is damage, please dispose of the appliance. If the appliance was provided by us as part of your tenancy agreement (e.g. a fridge) please report the damage to our Property Services team straight away.
- Never leave phones, tablets or laptops plugged in overnight or when you leave your home. In fact, save money and unplug anything that doesn't need to be plugged in such as the TV.
- Only use the charger that came with your phone, tablet, e-cigarette etc., don't buy cheap counterfeit chargers for items that use lithium-ion batteries and always ensure the item is placed on a hard surface whilst being charged. If you need to buy a replacement, always choose the genuine item from a supplier you can trust.
- Laptops are designed to be used on a hard surface so they remain cool - if left on or used when on bedding or soft furnishings, the vents are blocked so the device will overheat and cause a risk of fire.
- Don't overload your sockets and never connect one extension lead into another. Try to keep to one plug per socket, especially for high powered appliances like washing machines.

- Keep anything that could catch fire away from portable heaters, don't place clothes on them to dry and ensure they are unplugged overnight / when you leave the property.

## Mobility Scooters and E-Scooters

We would ask that residents don't charge electric scooters or mobility scooters inside their property. If you need to do so as an absolute necessity, please make contact with your Housing Officer who will then discuss your situation with our Health and Safety team.

Ensure the vehicle is located where it will not compromise escape routes in the event of a fire.

## In the event of a fire in your flat or bedroom:

Alert fellow residents by activating the alarm if it hasn't gone off, or by shouting 'FIRE' or by knocking on doors BUT ONLY IF IT IS SAFE FOR YOU TO DO SO.

Leave the building, making sure your front door is closed as you leave, stay out of the building, call 999 and ask for the Fire Service.

## Evacuation

If you live in a supported living service, you will all have your own Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA) and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) that staff will discuss with you.

Depending on your mobility and your understanding of the evacuation process, you may be physically assisted by staff to evacuate.

If you live in one of our Supported Housing flats and feel that you would have difficulty either responding to a fire alarm or self-evacuating, please get in touch with your Housing Officer. We will then arrange to come out and undertake a PCFRA with you. If we identify risks which we don't feel we can sufficiently mitigate we will refer you over to our Health & Safety team for further advice.

Please remember to let us know if your circumstances change, even temporarily. For example, if you can usually self-evacuate but cannot for a time because of recovery from an accident. We might need to consider temporary measures to give you extra protection in the event of a fire.

We can arrange for a free home safety visit from your local fire service - let us know if you would like one.

## Finally

Before you go to bed, make sure you're as safe from fire as you can be by:

- Closing your internal doors to prevent smoke spreading if a fire starts.
- Turning off/ unplugging any electrical device that doesn't need to be on.
- Checking your oven, hob, washing machine or tumble dryer and any portable heaters are turned off.
- Ensuring cigarettes, candles, incense sticks and oil burners are all extinguished safely.
- Making sure you have a safe route out of your home by removing any items along your escape route that could block your way or trip you up in an emergency.
- Keeping door and window keys where you can find them easily.





## 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

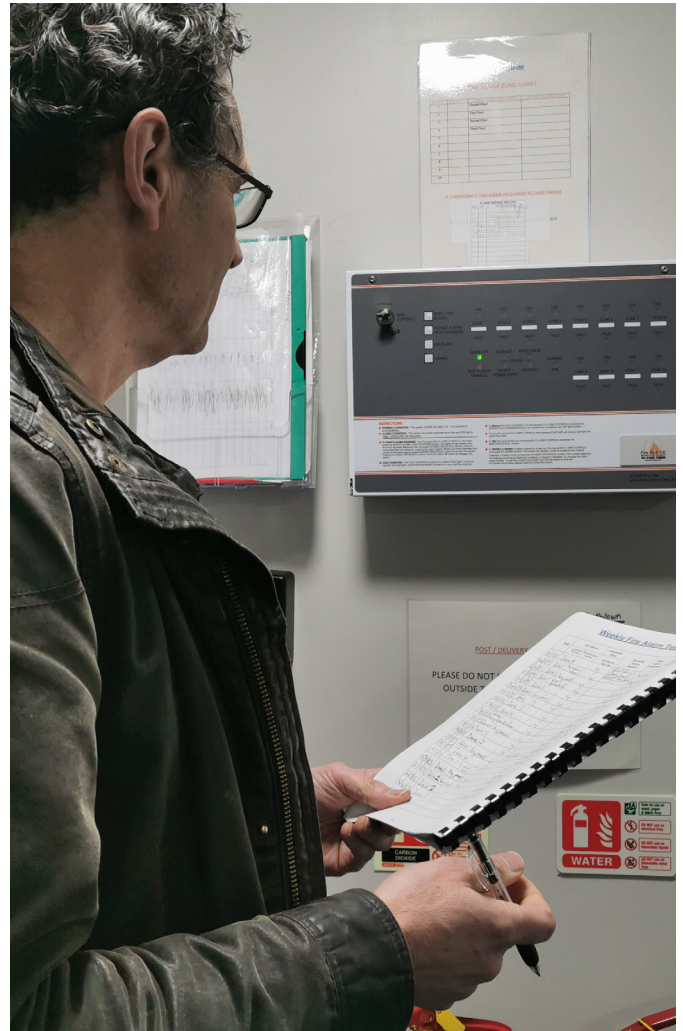
- If you have a door chain and spy hole, use them to help you to identify callers. Use your intercom system if you have one.
- If it is someone you don't know, always ask for proof of identity and keep them waiting outside until you have checked their identity. Southdown staff and our Contractors always 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 fulfil 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 be on a need-to-know basis.

More information about how Southdown stores and uses your data is available on our website [www.southdown.org](http://www.southdown.org)





## Southdown

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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).

