

Southdown

southdown.org

Impact report

2024-25



Providing **care, support** and
housing in Sussex since 1972

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Sarah's story

One of Southdown's clients, Sarah, shares her amazing story of hope and resilience.

“For me, Southdown is about kindness, respect and genuine support. They help people like me move forward with our lives and gain independence. I see the difference they make in my life and in the lives of others.

My name is Sarah and I live in Rye. I've been supported by Southdown for more than twelve years, and they've helped me through some of the toughest times in my life.

I was diagnosed with bipolar when I was 16, and have had many hospital admissions over the years. Through Southdown, I've learned to understand my mental health better and find ways to manage.

I spent three years with the Thinking Well service, which supports people struggling with their feelings. It was intense and emotional, but the staff were always kind, approachable and supportive. They helped me through difficult moments and gave me tools I still use today.

One of the services I really value is Staying

Well, which is open evenings. Knowing it's there as part of my self-care toolkit gives me reassurance. The staff are empathetic and approachable, and they've supported me through crises, including a recent family problem.

I also regularly take part in an online peer group run by the Wellbeing Centre. It means I can connect with others for a friendly chat, which is so important for people who might find it hard to get out due to mobility, anxiety, or other challenges.

Being involved in Southdown's client and tenant group has also given me confidence and the chance to contribute to changes that can help others. It feels good to know that my voice makes a difference.

Welcome

Welcome to Southdown's 2024-25 impact report.



As Chair of the Board, I am proud to reflect on another year where Southdown has stood alongside thousands of people across Sussex, supporting them to live with dignity, independence, and hope.

Every achievement highlighted in this report is a testament to the dedication and compassion of our staff, volunteers, and partners, who consistently go above and beyond to make a difference in people's lives.

We know the challenges facing our communities are significant, but what shines through is the resilience of the people we support and the creativity of our teams in responding to their needs.

This year has also marked an important milestone with the successful recruitment of

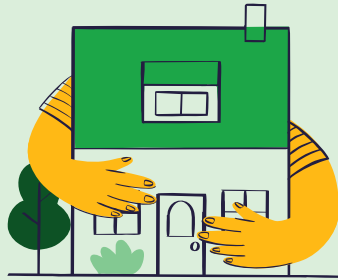
a new C-Suite leadership team. They bring with them a wealth of experience and will play a vital role in shaping and guiding our strategy, ensuring Southdown continues to grow stronger and deliver services that truly reflect the needs and voices of our clients and tenants.

Looking ahead, the Board remains committed to guiding Southdown with integrity, ambition, and care. Together, we will continue to grow our impact, strengthen our foundations, and ensure that Southdown is here for everyone who needs us, now and in the years to come.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a few sharp strokes.

Pauline Ford

Chair of the Board



Our vision

We believe everyone has the right to access support that enables them to feel safe, be well, and live the life they choose.

Our values

Our values shape how we deliver our strategy and define success beyond numbers.

Force for good

Brilliant with people

United

Trustworthy

Responsive

About us

Southdown is a leading provider of housing, care, and support services across Sussex.

For over 50 years, we have worked alongside people, communities, and partners to help individuals live well, achieve their ambitions, and enjoy fulfilling lives. As a not-for-profit organisation, we exist to break down barriers, tackle inequality, and ensure that people have access to the right support at the right time in their lives.


At Southdown, we are guided by the belief that:

- A **safe home** provides the foundation for stability and opportunity.
- **Connection and purpose** help people thrive in their communities.
- High-quality, **person-centred support** empowers people to lead their own lives.

These beliefs underpin everything we do, from supported housing and community mental health services to employment support and help for people with learning disabilities. Our approach is shaped by the voices of the people who use our services, ensuring that support is personalised, responsive, and rooted in what matters most to them.

We are proud to be a trusted partner to local authorities, the NHS, and community organisations, working collaboratively to create positive change at both individual and community levels.

Each year, our dedicated workforce makes a real difference to the lives of thousands of people, helping to build stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities across Sussex.



**I feel excited and
rested. I feel proud
of myself. I'm always
smiley. I'm a happy
person.**

- Southdown client

2024-25 highlights



95%

Almost 95% of people told us that the support they receive has made a positive difference to their lives.

This shows the positive impact our services have and reflects the **dedication, compassion, and commitment** of our teams to helping people feel supported and valued in their lives.

Staff explained everything clearly and made me feel part of the decision-making.

- Southdown client



Beacon

This year we completed the full roll out of the **Southdown Beacon** across all our services and teams.

The Beacon is our values-led framework that combines lived experience, clinical insight, and staff voice into a shared culture.

It helps us deliver support that is trauma-aware, person-centred, and rooted in dignity, safety, and hope.



982

Our Financial Inclusion team supported **982 people** to improve their financial wellbeing, helping individuals out of poverty and ensuring they can access the vital support they need.

**It's not just talk.
Southdown
actually act on
what we say.**

- Southdown client



2,609

Our Supported Employment services supported **2,609 people** on their journey into employment - building skills, confidence, and opportunities along the way.



4,500

Over **4,500 open-access support sessions** were delivered through our Staying Well crisis cafes.

Throughout **2024/25** we continued to **expand our reach** and the **quality of our services** across Sussex.



We continued to invest in **recruiting, developing and retaining outstanding people**, ensuring our staff remain at the heart of delivering high-quality support.



97% of Southdown tenants said their home is **safe and well maintained**. This reflects the quality and care we provide.

“ I like my home. I feel comfortable here. Being here is freedom. I can go out when I like, come back when I like. I’ve got a lot more independence.

- Southdown tenant

“ The best thing about Southdown is that someone’s there listening to me.

- Southdown client



All 24 of our registered learning disability services continue to meet CQC requirements, providing care that is **safe, compassionate, and person centred**.

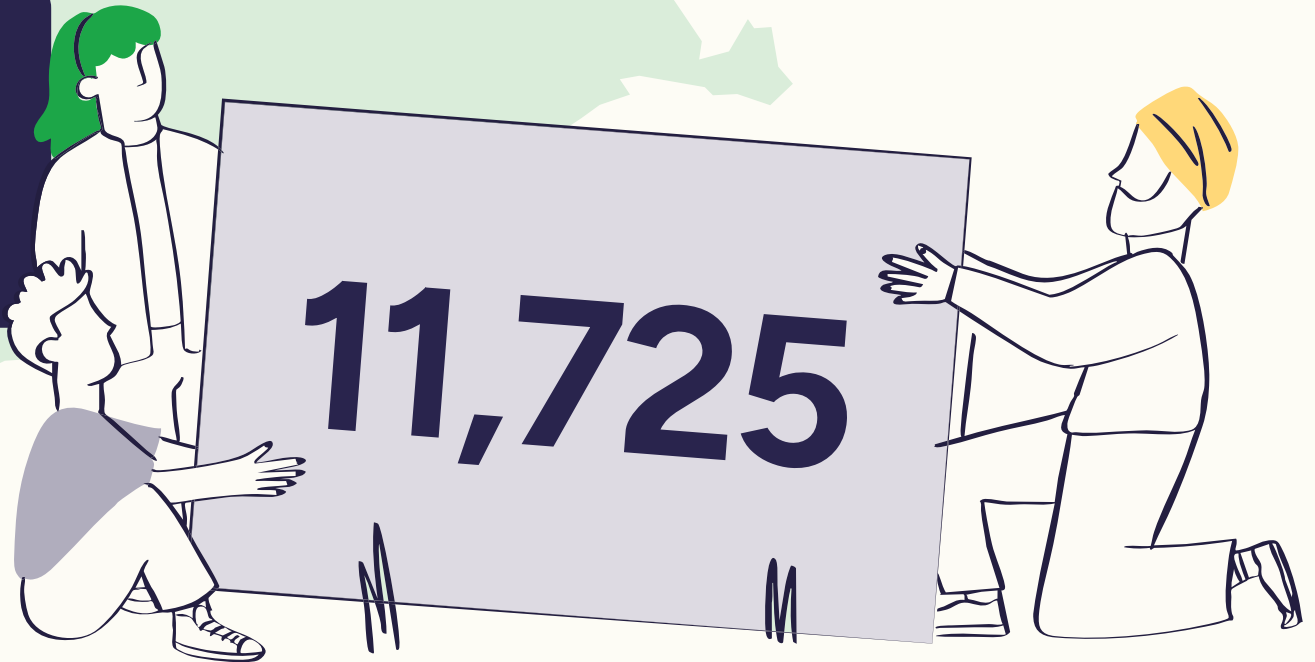
“ I’m so happy. It’s my home,
my forever home. It’s given
my children peace of mind
too. I’m in a safe, secure
environment.

- Southdown tenant

In total, we **supported**
11,725 people to live their
lives with dignity, respect,
and independence.



Our **Community Navigators**
delivered 2,052 social prescribing
sessions that helped people
explore and engage with what
is important for their health and
wellbeing.





One in four people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England.

*Mind (2020)

Supporting better mental health

Every year, thousands of people turn to Southdown when they are struggling with their mental health.

Over the past year, our services have continued to be a vital lifeline for people across Sussex, helping people through crisis, building confidence in recovery, and supporting them into meaningful work and community life.

Despite facing a 15% reduction in core funding across the VCSE sector, our staff worked with care and determination to redesign support so that no one felt abandoned or overlooked.

Our Staying Well Crisis Cafes became even more accessible, moving to an open access

model so people can drop in without referral. We also strengthened these services by embedding NHS mental health practitioners into the teams. This integration meant that more than 4,500 people were supported in safe, welcoming spaces when they needed it most.

We also took important steps to influence and shape the wider mental health system. Southdown played a key role in the new Neighbourhood Mental Health Team workstreams, making sure that the voices of voluntary and community organisations, and

the people we support, are central to how local care is designed.

Alongside this, we expanded our employment programmes, securing new NHS investment and sharing our expertise nationally through IPS Grow, a programme that helps people with mental health challenges find and keep work.

To improve accessibility, we purchased and opened a new city centre office and a dedicated space for Brighton and Hove Recovery College, providing a hub for learning and peer support.

What are Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams?

Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams are a new way of providing support in local communities. Instead of people having to navigate complicated services, these teams bring NHS staff, GPs, and voluntary and community organisations like Southdown together under one roof.

“ I have found going to the groups has helped. Speaking to other clients who experience bipolar, and understanding what each other experience, helps us pick up ideas on how to manage situations.

- Southdown client



Connecting people across Sussex


Southdown leads UOK, a partnership designed to make mental health support easier to find and access.

Originally launched in Brighton & Hove, UOK expanded into East Sussex in early 2024, widening its reach to thousands more people.

Over the past year, we introduced Qwell, a free and anonymous online support service available across Sussex, and created a new centralised access point in partnership with Together Co, so people can be guided to the right help more quickly.

We also redesigned the UOK website, making it clearer and more accessible, ensuring that anyone looking for support can find what they need, when they need it.

To find out more, visit: uok.org.uk



I got this job through my lived
experience, which was eye
opening and breathtaking.
It turned a negative to a
positive.

Southdown Peer
Support Worker

Simon's story

“ I felt like a burden. That there was no point carrying on and it would be easier for everyone else. I'd had my time.

Sharing experiences is very healthy. I'm a Peer Support Worker at Southdown and I got this job through my lived experience, which was eye opening and breathtaking. It turned a negative to a positive.

It's the perfect job in terms of what I'd been through. I now have a deeper level of understanding and it creates a level of empathy that goes beyond anything else.

As a Peer Support Worker, you have to be yourself, be open, and that creates a level of safety.

I can create a gentleness with clients that they're not necessarily going to experience elsewhere. You get mentored really well in this service. I'm developing skills of listening, tenderness, and quietness.

Know that you're not alone. There are other people out there who've lived it and are willing to share that with you. We're now living in the world of the individual, but it's about recognising that what we share is most important. Instead of looking for difference, we should look for the similarities.

What is peer support?

Peer support brings the value of lived experience into our services. At Southdown it helps build trust, reduce stigma, and give people hope by showing that recovery and change are possible.

By embedding peer support across our services, we create communities where people feel truly understood, connected, and empowered to take the next steps in their lives.



Mandy's story



It's vitally important to support people to live independent, meaningful lives. Everyone has the right to live as they choose.

I just love supporting the clients. They teach me as much as I support them. They make my life wonderful, actually.

Every year we have a Quality Day. It's a good team-building exercise where we get together outside the service and talk about things.

We can open up about any worries we have, discuss a particular topic, and how we can improve the way we work so we can do the best we can for clients.

- Southdown support worker

Independence and meaningful purpose

Our learning disability services support over 160 people across Sussex to live the lives they choose, with dignity, independence, and belonging.

Across our registered care homes and supported living services, we provide care and support that is relationship-based, person-centred, and consistent with our commitment to quality.

In 2024/25, we continued to strengthen opportunities for people to connect with their communities, reduce loneliness, and build a stronger sense of belonging. We also worked alongside national and local partners on key sector priorities, including workforce reform

and dementia care planning for people with learning disabilities, ensuring our services can respond to changing demographics and increasing complexity of need.

Throughout a year of change in adult social care, we maintained trusted relationships with families and commissioners, enabling continuity of care and stability for the people we support.

Our registered services continue to meet Care

Quality Commission (CQC) requirements, and are preparing for re-inspection, following system wide delays due to capacity issues within CQC.

We are also proud of the achievements and creativity across our services. From reducing restraint and advancing positive behaviour support, to showcasing the talents of the people we support through concerts, fiestas, and community events, and celebrating our staff whose dedication was recognised nationally as part of campaigns championing adult social care.

“ The staff are really nice. They help me with my anxiety and give me reassurance. That helps me feel calmer. They’re really kind and caring and they listen really well and help us a lot.

- Southdown client

Major milestone: Reducing restraint

In 2024/25, Southdown achieved a 65% reduction in the use of physical restraint techniques and a 73% reduction in the application of personal safety techniques across our Learning Disability services.


This milestone has had a direct and positive impact on people’s quality of life, reducing the risk of trauma and enabling greater dignity, independence, and choice.

The change has been driven by our positive behaviour support approach, improving communication, developing coping skills, and creating safe environments that prevent the need for restrictions.

Staff and clients have worked together to embed new strategies, supported by training certified by the British Institute of Learning Disability against the Restraint Reduction Network standards.

Of the 38 people in our services with a restraint or personal safety technique in their support plan, 35 have not used at least one technique in three years, prompting reviews to remove them altogether.

This achievement reflects our commitment to rights-based, person-centred care, and showcases the dedication of both our staff and the people we support.

A middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a blue and red plaid shirt, is sitting in a wheelchair. He is looking down at a black microscope on a table in front of him. He has a thumbs-up gesture on his right hand and a satisfied expression on his face. The background shows a brick wall and a green mesh cover.

**Sometimes I help with the
staff team meeting. I like to
open the meeting for them. I
say, "Come in and sit down."
It's great, I really love it.**

Southdown client

Martyn's story

“ It's great living here. I like that I can go out. I like to go all over the place – as far as possible! It's exciting to see new things.

I get excited planning trips. I'm going to a concert in Reading soon just before my birthday, and I'm going to start saving up for Cornwall next year. I choose where I want to go and who takes me on holiday. This year I went to Dorset. The bed was too hard! Next time, I'll take my own mattress.

It's great having support here. They help me have a bath and with the toilet and stuff. It's my home day today so we are going to do my online food shop and then go to the bank.

I like helping people and being involved. Recently I was in a training video to help people learn how to do manual handling. They looked at me using a hoist and getting into my wheelchair. I helped them a lot.

I like to induct new staff and show them how to work with me. I'm good at giving them feedback.

Sometimes I help with the staff team meeting. I like to open the meeting for them. I say, "Come in and sit down." It's great, I really love it."

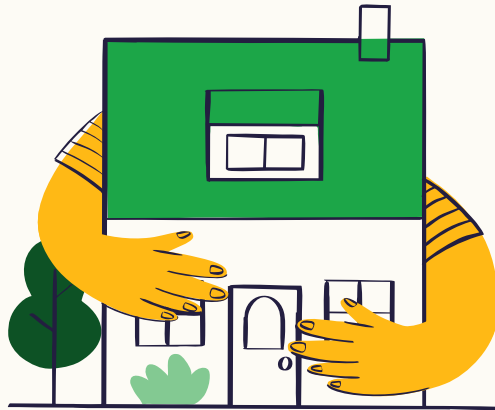
Positive behaviour support

Positive behaviour support (PBS) is a way to help people with learning disabilities or autism by focusing on their strengths and needs.

With PBS, we try to understand what the person is trying to communicate and find ways to help them meet their needs.



Providing more than just a home



97%

97% of tenants say their home is **safe and well maintained** while 90% say they feel treated **fairly and with respect**.

Southdown provides safe, secure homes and tailored support to help people sustain their tenancies, avoid homelessness, and live fulfilling lives in their communities.

In **housing management**, we successfully implemented the new Consumer Standards introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing, strengthening our governance, assurance, and tenant involvement. We also aligned fully with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, embedding a learning culture shaped by tenant feedback.

Alongside these improvements, we continued to invest in safe, quality homes through upgrades to compliance systems,

asset management planning, and repairs monitoring. Training was delivered to all Board members and staff on the new regulatory framework, ensuring shared accountability for our responsibilities as a landlord. We also played an active role in the national debate on supported housing reform, responding to government consultations to make sure the voices of tenants, frontline staff, and the people we support were represented.

In **housing support**, we delivered integrated

services that prevented homelessness and helped people move towards stability.

Across Sussex, we supported hundreds of people through services including homelessness prevention, Housing First, move-on and resettlement, step-down from mental health in-patient stays, and other tailored support. Working with commissioners, we co-designed a remodelled Rough Sleeper Initiative service, strengthening outreach provision and creating a more resilient structure.

We maintained continuity of support through periods of funding transition, drawing praise from commissioners for our constructive, partnership-based approach. Our teams supported successful moves from hospital, higher supported accommodation, or street homelessness into stable tenancies, helping to reduce crises and pressure on statutory services.

We also used insight from client feedback and satisfaction surveys to refine service design, including introducing new digital tools to support real-time case management and cross-service collaboration.

Homes that change lives


Supported housing is more than just a roof. It transforms lives. With the security of a safe home and the right support, people can rebuild confidence, regain independence, and move away from crisis. A stable place to live provides the foundation for better health, stronger relationships, and opportunities for recovery.

Supported housing helps people take vital steps forward. Whether someone is leaving hospital or finding a route away from street homelessness, supported housing provides a bridge to stability. By preventing relapse, avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions, and reducing reliance on emergency accommodation, it eases pressure on health and care services and

saves the public purse significant costs.

Housing is critical infrastructure. Without secure and supported homes, recovery cannot take root and resilience is harder to build. Yet when housing and support are in place, the results are transformative. People move forward with hope and communities thrive.

That is why sustained investment in supported housing matters. It is not only a lifeline for the individuals we work alongside, it is also a cornerstone of healthier and more inclusive communities.



**It felt like home the day I
moved in. It's a sanctuary.
Quiet and secure. It's helped
me with giving me a bit of
stability.**

Southdown tenant

Terry's story

“ Took me nine years to get this far. It's a hell of a long time until you finally feel settled but I feel I'm starting to put roots down.

Nine years ago I was homeless, living on the streets in Worthing. I got moved about a bit. I couldn't put down roots 'cos I didn't know when I'd move on to other projects.

When I first moved in here there was a positivity. The whole ambience felt positive. I was nominated to come here by Turning Tides, they realised that I would be appreciative of being able to make the most of this situation. Which I am.

I get support here that I didn't get elsewhere. They've been brilliant here. One of the biggest things was working out how to pay my own bills. I hadn't done it for years. I got support setting up the utilities. I know I can do it now.

I work part-time cleaning at B&Q and I volunteer with Turning Tides, doing some events with them. I like meeting people. It's quite nice for me personally to share my experience and what's helped me.

Southdown Steps

Southdown Steps, funded through the Government's national Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme, provides safe accommodation and tailored tenancy support for people moving on from homelessness or temporary housing in Adur and Worthing.

With on-site Housing Specialists and dedicated Housing Officers, the service helps people build independence, improve wellbeing, and move towards a secure long-term home.



Co-production

At Southdown, co-production means listening to clients and tenants, valuing their insight, and working alongside them to shape how we do things.

This year we've seen powerful examples of what this looks like in practice.

Through the Client and Tenant Involvement programme and the 2024 Satisfaction Survey, hundreds of people told us what works well, what needs to change, and what could make their home or support better.

We've turned this feedback into action – from creating more welcoming spaces like the new beanbags at Isetta Square, to improving communication and making surveys and interview score sheets more accessible with EasyRead formats.

Clients and tenants are also working with us to improve how we handle complaints. Scrutiny groups have reviewed real cases, challenged outcomes they felt were unfair, and shared what “fair” looks like from their perspective. Their voices are helping shape clearer communication, more transparent processes, and training for staff, so that raising a concern feels safe and leads to real learning.

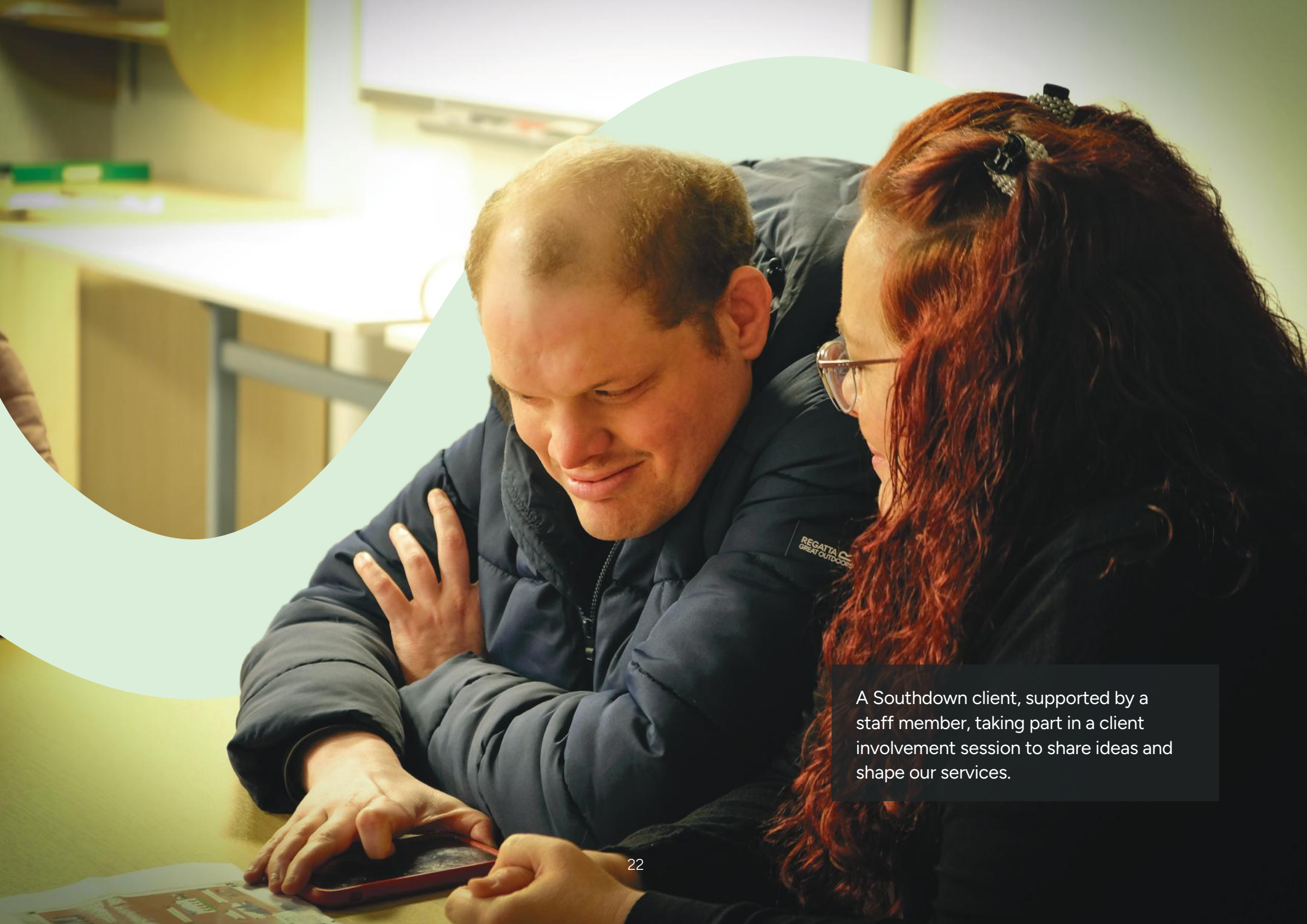
Together, these successes show that when we involve clients and tenants in decision-making, services improve, trust grows, and our communities feel stronger.



Recruiting our leadership teams

Clients and tenants played a central role in the recruitment of Southdown's new C-Suite team. They co-designed EasyRead interview score sheets, joined the interview panels, and gave honest feedback on how candidates communicated, listened, and showed empathy.

Their involvement ensured the process focused not only on professional skills, but also on the values and behaviours that matter most to the people we support.



A Southdown client, supported by a staff member, taking part in a client involvement session to share ideas and shape our services.

Shaping services together

Our Working Together Charter sets out how we work in partnership with clients and tenants.

At Southdown, we believe the best services are shaped in genuine partnership with the people who use them. That is why we worked with clients and tenants to co-design our Working Together Charter, a shared agreement on the standards we all uphold. It reflects our commitment to listening, learning and ensuring every voice influences how support is designed and delivered.

While the Charter draws on national frameworks from the CQC, the Regulator of Social Housing and the National Housing Federation, it is rooted in the lived experiences of our communities. It sets out the values we share: fairness, inclusion, accountability and respect, and what clients and tenants can expect from us. Above all, it shows that working together is at the heart of achieving lasting change.

“ This was a positive experience where I felt valued and heard. My opinions were respected and taken into account, and I felt like I belonged. Open discussion was encouraged.

- Southdown client

Relationships

We will build relationships based on fairness, honesty, and transparency.

Accountability

We will be open about our decisions and answerable for how they affect your services.

When things go wrong

We will offer clear and supportive ways to raise concerns and get help.

Communication

We will provide timely and clear updates about what matters to you.

Quality

We will deliver high standards in your home and in our services.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We will ensure everyone is heard and valued, regardless of background or ability.

Voice and influence

We will listen to your views and use them to shape how services are designed and run.



Southdown Leadership

This year we completed recruitment of a new C-suite leadership team to guide Southdown through the next stage of our journey. Together they bring stability, fresh energy, and a shared commitment to our values.

Neil Blanchard

Chief Executive

Jo Raisey

Chief Experience and Transformation Officer

Matt Gough

Chief Operations Officer

Michael Barford

Chief Finance Officer

You can read more about the Southdown leadership team at: southdown.org

A great place to work

At Southdown, we know that the impact we make for clients and tenants depends on the people who work here. We are proud to be recognised nationally as an inclusive and supportive employer where colleagues can thrive.

During 2024/25:

- We were named one of the UK's **Top 30 family-friendly employers** for the 12th year running.
- We retained our **Investors in People Gold Award**, reflecting our commitment to staff wellbeing and development.
- We were accredited as a **Disability Confident Employer**, ensuring opportunities and support for disabled staff.

Together, these achievements show our commitment to being **Brilliant with People** and ensuring Southdown is a place where everyone feels valued, supported, and able to succeed.

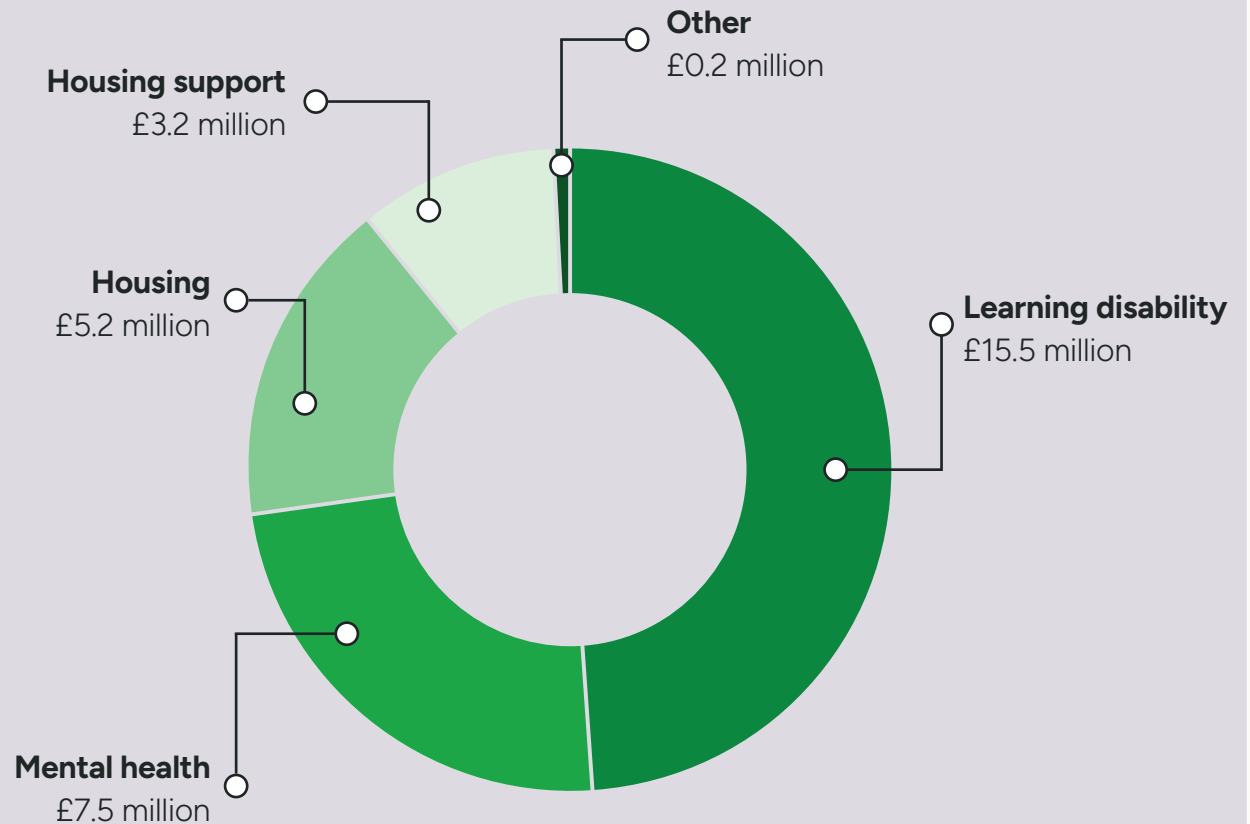
Our finances

Rising costs, workforce pressures, and uncertainty in long term funding have created difficult conditions for many providers. Despite this, Southdown has maintained strong financial management and stability.

Our approach has been to plan carefully, adapt quickly, and always prioritise the people and communities we support. This resilience means we are able to continue investing in high quality services today while building the foundations for a sustainable future.

In 2024/25 our total income was £31.6 million. We ensure that our resources go directly into supporting people across Sussex, while maintaining the stability needed to invest in our future.

Income 2024/25





Southdown CEO Neil Blanchard speaks to BBC Sussex outside Chichester County Hall during the **Together for Social Care** rally, urging West Sussex County Council for an urgent 8% fee uplift to sustain critical learning disability support services.

Looking ahead

Shaped by experience
and ready for the
future



Neil Blanchard
Chief Executive

Southdown's new 2025-30 strategy is shaped by the voices of the people we support, our staff, and our partners. It recognises the reality of life across Sussex today and sets out how we will respond with ambition, compassion, and resilience.

We are not content with "good enough." Our strategy is a commitment to breaking down barriers, expanding access to housing, enabling independence and purpose, and building financial resilience. These are not abstract goals, they are practical promises that will change lives.

A safe home, a sense of belonging, and meaningful opportunities are the building blocks of wellbeing. Too many people are denied these foundations. By 2030, our ambition is to reach thousands more people across Sussex, ensuring no one is left behind.

Southdown has always been a **force for good**,

and in the years ahead we will redouble our efforts, working alongside the NHS, local authorities, and voluntary sector partners to join up support so it feels seamless, timely, and human. We will invest in new homes, grow our services, and continue to champion the rights and strengths of those who too often feel overlooked.

Most importantly, we will hold fast to our values: being brilliant with people, acting with integrity, and always responding with compassion. These are the foundations that will carry us into the future, helping us stay true to our purpose: to support people to live the lives they choose, with dignity, respect, and independence.

Together, with the continued commitment of our staff, volunteers, and partners, we will build a stronger, more inclusive Southdown for the decade ahead.

Our **strategic objectives for 2025–30** set the direction for how we will work and grow in the years ahead.

Breaking down silos

We will connect housing, mental health, and learning and physical disability services through integrated pathways and better referrals so support feels seamless and human.

Enabling independence and meaningful purpose

We will grow employment, volunteering, and progression opportunities and co-design support that builds skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Expanding housing access

We will invest in and secure more safe, high quality homes, offer longer tenancies, and help more people sustain independent living across Sussex.

Creating financial flexibility and resilience

We will diversify income, strengthen planning and risk management, and focus on a balanced service portfolio so our support remains strong and sustainable

By 2030, our ambition is to reach thousands more people across Sussex, focusing on those most at risk of being left behind and making sure support is available wherever it is needed most. We will design our services alongside the people who use them, with lived experience continuing to guide our decisions so that support always feels relevant, respectful and rooted in real life.

Our staff are at the heart of Southdown, and we will continue to invest in their wellbeing, training, and development. Through the Southdown Beacon, we will keep building a culture of compassion, integrity, and excellence. At the same time, we will strengthen our role as a leader and partner, bringing housing, health and social care together so that people experience seamless and joined up support.

Looking ahead, we will also build our financial resilience and remain open to innovation. By piloting new approaches and investing in what works, we will stay agile, responsive and ready to meet the changing needs of our communities.

Together, we are building
a **stronger, more inclusive**
Southdown.

Want to see the full picture?

Our new five-year strategy sets out how we will expand our reach, strengthen our services, and stand alongside even more people across Sussex.

Scan the QR code below or visit the Southdown website to read the full plan and explore our vision for the future.



Thank you

Southdown's achievements this year have only been possible because of the people and communities around us.

We thank our staff and volunteers for their commitment and professionalism. We thank the people we support for their trust and for sharing their experiences. We thank our partners and funders for their continued support and collaboration.

Together we have created meaningful change and laid strong foundations for the future. We look forward with confidence and optimism to all that we can achieve in the years ahead.

Thank you for being part of our journey.



Southdown



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Southdown is an exempt charity registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (L1829) and committed to the National Housing Federation's code of governance. Southdown is also a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefits Societies Act 2014 (20755R).