

Board response to Southdown's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and its Annual Review of Complaints 2025

As the Chair of Southdown's Service Quality Committee, I take my responsibility to clients and tenants very seriously. Complaints are an invaluable source of learning for Southdown - tenants and clients are uniquely placed to bring insight into the quality of our services and highlight areas for focus and improvement.

As a Board member, we support and promote a positive complaint handling culture - operating the same approach for both clients and tenants of Southdown. Themes from complaints raised, and information as to Southdown's management of complaints, offer us a direct insight into the experiences and perceptions of our clients, tenants and shared owners. I get further assurance as to the quality of our services through getting out, meeting staff, tenants and clients and triangulate this with the performance information the Board routinely review.

As the Board Chair of Southdown's Service Quality Committee and member responsible for overseeing complaints, I was pleased to receive our annual review of complaints and review Southdown's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. This annual review of complaints provides a comprehensive overview of the complaints we received over the past year, the trends we've identified, and the actions we've taken to address them.

[Southdown's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code](#)

Having read this report and self-assessment and reviewed the complaints, and Southdown's responses to these, I'm confident that Southdown is compliant with the Ombudsman's Code both in spirit and in practice.

This report both highlights those areas where Southdown excel and, crucially, shines a light on areas where we need to improve. These improvements are being implemented as part of our complaints process review.

What is going well?

Southdown meets all requirements of the Code, with clear evidence and commentary provided for each provision. The Service Quality Committee's review

of gave me the necessary assurance that we were complying with both the letter and the spirit of the revised framework. The organisation has a well-embedded two-stage complaint process, ensuring accessibility, and maintains transparency in reporting.

The use of the "Beacon" framework clearly ensures a psychologically informed and person-centred approach to complaint handling, with emphasis on empathy, understanding, and appropriate remedies.

Clients and tenants have been involved in reviewing complaints received, their perspective on the complaints we have received have helped inform Southdown's annual review of complaints helping us to identify themes and draw out wider findings.

Even better if...

My reflections, and those of the board were that the number of complaints were very low overall. Whilst this may be, in part, due to the excellent services that Southdown provides, we also challenged as to whether this potentially reflected a reluctance, on the part of clients and tenants, to come forward and let us know what didn't go well for them for fear of it impacting upon the essential support services they are in receipt of. These issues are to be addressed as part of the ongoing review.

Because complaints are such an excellent source of learning for Southdown – so long as we are able to have consistent assurance that service quality is being maintained - I actually hope in future years we see an increase in the number of complaints received.

Performance against complaint handling targets varied considerably across the business. Whilst some complaints received by our mental health services appear to have been complex and difficult to respond to as a result of the needs of the clients – in other cases responses appeared to have been delayed as a side-effect of some of the complex partnership arrangements we are involved in. As in our previous years review of complaints it was clear that where we have developed innovative new service models, we still need to find ways of quickly clarifying the levels of service clients can expect from us.

Complaints Project

The Board have endorsed the complaints project currently underway – this redesign of the complaints process, accompanied by training for Southdown colleagues, aims to put accessibility and considerations of the client and tenant at the heart of the process and provide clients with reassurance about continuity of service, allowing external or peer review for contentious complaints. The project will also ensure we consistently use data to identify systemic issues and inform service improvements.

Conclusion

Through our insight into the involvement activities underway and regular review of complaints I shall continue to ensure not only that the voice of clients is heard but that we create more opportunities for clients and tenants to scrutinise our performance and drive positive change within our organisation, shaping the way services are delivered.

I remain impressed by the dedication and professionalism shown by the managers handling complaints. Their focus on resolving issues fairly and effectively is admirable. Through the team's review process, it's clear that complaints not only get addressed but also provide valuable insights that help Southdown better anticipate and respond to the, often complex, needs of its clients and tenants.

This ongoing commitment to learning and improvement is a real strength, and it gives me great confidence in the organisation's ability to continue delivering high-quality, person-centred support.

Whether you are a client, a tenant or shared owner, an advocate or a parent your feedback matters to us. I'm enormously grateful to those who took the time to share their feedback with us, either through complaints or via annual client and tenant surveys.

Yours Sincerely

Jo Ellis, Chair, Service Quality Committee