

**Southdown**

[southdown.org](https://southdown.org)

# Our Impact

## 2025-2026



Providing care, support and housing in Sussex since 1972

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# Stuart's Story

**“** I was evicted a month after mum had died. It was brutal. I was her carer for five years.

I went to a hostel in Eastbourne and spent one year and three months there. I was scared. When you're in a hostel, there's so much going on.

My outreach team were brilliant. They found me this place. It's my home.

When I went through the doors, I thought, "Wow! How modern, how clean, and the size!" It's a place where my daughter and family can visit.

Peace is the big difference between here and a hostel. You feel calmer. You can start planning.

Knowing staff are here makes this transition easier, big time. If there's something I'm not sure about, the guys will look into it. If I want to speak to staff, they're a phone call or text away.

With my Housing Support Specialist, we normally meet once a week. We discuss what needs to be done and I'll go off and do it. I couldn't have done it without her – setting up Universal Credit, talking to the council... It's too much on my own. She takes all the stress away.

I know I'm on the last little step, so the trust I put into the team is paying off. Trust means your mental state gets better, focus gets better, and you can see a future. There's light at the end of the tunnel and it's up to you to keep that going. It does work. You can have a better life.”

**In 2025-26, we supported 11,075 people to live their lives with dignity, respect, and independence.**

**“**  
**There's light at the end of the tunnel.**



## Welcome

2025-26 was a challenging year across housing, social care and mental health in Sussex, with rising demand, increasing complexity of need and continued financial pressure. Throughout, Southdown has remained focused on providing support that helps people feel safe, stay well, and live the life they choose, as well as shaping change positively for the future.

The year marked the start of our 2025-30 strategy. We introduced clearer priorities, strengthened governance and improved financial planning, while continuing to invest in our people, leadership and systems.

Throughout the year, we worked closely with commissioners, partners and our clients and tenants to shape services that are more joined-up, accessible and centred around the people we support.

We launched our new Housing Strategy and progressed plans to improve existing homes and grow our housing offer.

In mental health, we continued to develop community-based support that is easier to access and better connected to people's needs.

And our learning disability services continued to provide quality support for people whilst identifying opportunities to grow and improve further.

We are incredibly proud of the commitment, compassion and professionalism shown by our colleagues, volunteers and partners every day. Their dedication continues to make a real difference in people's lives.

Southdown ends the year stronger, more connected and well placed for the next stage of our strategy. Thank you for reading our Impact Report and for your continued support.

**Pauline Ford**  
Chair of the Board

**Neil Blanchard**  
Chief Executive Officer



# 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 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 voluntary and community organisations, working collaboratively to create positive change for individuals and communities in Sussex.

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.

## 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



# 2025-26 Highlights

Listening to our clients and tenants remains a core priority, with our annual satisfaction survey showing positive feedback - **93% felt welcome and safe, 92% felt understood, accepted and respected, and 90% said they were satisfied with support** they have received.

Our Supported Employment services, provided in partnership with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, **supported 2,746 people on their journey into employment** – building skills, confidence, and opportunities along the way.

**1,658 open access support sessions were provided** through our Staying Well mental health crisis prevention services in Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings (St Leonards).

Our Financial Inclusion team was recognised at the National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers' (NAWRA) 50th anniversary event at the Houses of Parliament for the welfare rights advice they provide for Southdown staff, clients and tenants. **In 2025-26 the team supported 843 people to improve their financial wellbeing**, securing a combined total income claimed of **over £1million**.

We retained our Investors in People Gold accreditation and **celebrated 25 consecutive years of accreditation**, recognising long-term commitment to good people practices.

Ahead of Awaab's Law coming into force, **we strengthened our commitment to safe homes** by developing our systems and processes to respond to the housing safety risks covered by the legislation. We also **provided training** for staff and contractors.

Over the past three years, our Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach has helped us **significantly reduce the use of restrictive interventions across our learning disability services** - physical restraint down by **65%** and personal safety techniques down by **73%**. PBS is proven to improve quality of life by **helping people feel safer, more independent, and better supported in their daily lives.**

**92%** of our tenants said they were **satisfied** with the services they'd received from us.

**100% of our homes met the Decent Homes Standard** (guidance issued by the Government as to the age and condition of properties).

We were **awarded a new contract to continue delivering UOK** in Brighton & Hove for a further five years, with the option to extend for an additional two years.

Working alongside local NHS services, primary care, voluntary sector partners and people with lived experience, we **supported the successful launch of Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams.** These teams bring together mental health, GP and community services to provide more joined-up and personalised support, **making it easier for people to get the right help** without having to repeat their story or navigate multiple services.

We **donated 60 Chromebooks** to Cape Maclear Learning and Development, a charity based in Malawi that supports students into secondary and university education.

We **supported 719 people to secure and keep safe, affordable housing and avert crisis** through a range of housing and homelessness prevention support across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove.



# Supporting better mental health

Working more closely across teams and organisations - breaking down silos - is a key part of our strategy. During 2025-26, this has been most visible in the redesign of our community mental health services. The changes are helping to improve access to support, strengthen coordination between services, and make support more joined up for people.

We introduced a new online booking system to make it easier for people to access support and expanded the use of digital tools such as Qwell to provide early online help alongside face-to-face services. We also continued work to improve access to employment and financial support across our services.

We continued to improve how teams and systems work together, including integration with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's electronic patient record system, SystmOne, to improve information sharing, coordination and the overall effectiveness of services.

We have also continued working with NHS, primary care and voluntary sector partners to help develop Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams. While this work is still ongoing, strong foundations are now in place for more connected and accessible support.

## UOK: working in partnership

We are proud to lead UOK, a partnership of 23 community organisations working together to support mental health and wellbeing across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex. Over the past year, UOK has supported thousands of people, helping them access advice, wellbeing support and mental health services in their local communities.

## Qwell: free, online, 24/7 mental wellbeing service

Provided as part of the UOK mental health network, Qwell offers free online mental wellbeing support. Qwell gives people additional choice in how they access mental health support, with free, anonymous help available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This helps reduce barriers to support and improve access for people who may not feel able to use traditional services.

**Over 2025-26, 1,039 people across Brighton & Hove and East Sussex registered with Qwell, the online mental health service, and accessed support 6,394 times.**

# Alex's story

“It's helped me build trust and relationships with services. Spaces that are person-centred and that don't make you feel like a problem.

The staff are such a nice team. Having the activities out there on the tables helps you know there's things you can do. You also get a sense of a community, in a light touch way, where you start to see familiar people.

It's helped me build my ability to regulate around people because it's so consistent here. It helps me access other Southdown services too. Before, the Wellbeing Hub at Preston Park felt too much for me. But because it's in the same space as Staying Well, it's now been easier for me to access.

Staying Well is really valuable because it diverts me from services like A&E. Being in A&E is a really triggering experience for me.

And more than that, it's a good place for neurodivergent people because it's a low sensory environment. You quite often need somewhere to calm down and talk things over.”

Staying Well is an out-of-hours walk-in service for people aged 18 or over experiencing mental distress or requiring crisis support. Open 7 days a week, 365 days a year, Staying Well provides psychosocial support within a safe, supportive, and therapeutic environment without the need for an appointment.

Staying Well services are run as a partnership between Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and voluntary sector organisations in Sussex. We provide the services in Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne, and Hastings (St Leonards).

**We provide a range of free community-based mental health services across Sussex to support people to get well, stay well, and prevent crisis.**

“Staying Well's been good for me - I think it's fundamental that spaces like this exist.

# Enabling independence and meaningful purpose

Helping people live independently and lead fulfilling lives is at the heart of what we do. During 2025-26, we continued to invest in opportunities that support social connection, confidence and wellbeing alongside day-to-day support.

This included expanding community activities and introducing activity coordinators in several learning disability services to help people take part in local activities, build relationships and develop new skills.

We also strengthened our focus on volunteering and employment. This includes the development of a more ambitious and coordinated volunteering offer, and plans to expand employment support across our learning disability services in the year ahead. This will help to create clearer pathways for people to move toward independence, skills development and meaningful occupation. While this work is ongoing, strong foundations are now in place to help more people not just live well but thrive.

## Putting people at the centre of 'My Life'

In 2025, we updated My Life, our planning tool used across our learning disability services to help make sure support is based on each person's goals, strengths and choices.

The updated approach was developed with input from the people we support, their families and staff. It builds on our Positive Behaviour Support approach and focuses on helping people have a better quality of life.

The rollout included workshops, shared learning and direct involvement from the people we support, helping keep lived experience and people's voices at the centre of how support is planned and delivered.

**We provide a range of services for around 160 people with learning disabilities and are specialists in supporting individuals with additional physical disabilities and behaviour support needs.**



# Juliet's story

**“** A Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) plan is personalised to me and it's a plan for my support staff to know how to work with me.

*I liked planning and coming up with my own ideas and pictures on how it's best to support me. We came up with things I find difficult or trigger me to feel stressed and what I get upset with, and that's how we found out what I need.*

*We developed social stories which are scenarios to help me cope better, and I chose the emotional flashcards I want to use to help explain how I'm feeling. They help me when I'm anxious, or cross, or don't understand something.*

*I presented my plan in a staff meeting. I felt a bit nervous when I did the presentation, but it was fun. I was getting my confidence up. I felt listened to. I got enjoyment out of doing something different.*

*I've been working on building good relationships and good communication with people. It's felt nice doing this. I like to go out a lot more and I go to a gardening club.*

*I also like doing art lessons. Doing craft like colouring and drawing has helped with my anxiety. I go with a friend and we share our experiences with each other.*

*Budgeting my money better is helping me be more independent. I'm going out and choosing my own plants, and I'm making better choices with my food shopping.*

*Having this plan is helping me be more independent, and I now have tools to help me manage my feelings. I have less anxiety now. It's taught me that good things can happen with change.”*

**Keeping clients and staff safe is a priority in our learning disability support services. One of the ways we do this is through training our Support Workers and Service Managers to understand challenging behaviours and create supportive strategies to help enhance a client's quality of life. Our Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) training is certified by the British Institute of Learning Disability (BILD) against the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) standards.**

**“** I liked being involved in the Positive Behaviour Support plan. I enjoyed the process. It felt good because it helped me feel in control and I could decide when to meet and what to talk about.

# Expanding housing access

Access to safe, stable housing is essential for wellbeing and independence, so growing and improving our housing offer remains a key priority.

During 2025-26, we developed a new Housing Strategy to guide future growth while keeping a strong focus on quality, safety and the experience of tenants. We also continued work on an asset management plan to help maintain and improve our existing homes, including making them more energy efficient and fit for the future.

We expanded our housing through the purchase of four properties from Guild Care and an agreement to acquire nine more properties in Mid Sussex. At the same time, we have been improving how we fund and deliver new housing projects.

We are also working with Brighton and Hove City Council and other partners on the Emergency Temporary Accommodation programme, helping to provide safe housing for people in urgent need.

Together, this work puts us in a strong position to continue growing our housing in a sustainable and well-planned way during 2026-27.



## Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

TSMs, introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in England, are a way that tenants can assess the performance of their landlord in providing good quality homes and services.

Overall, our 2025-26 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) showed very positive feedback from tenants, alongside strong landlord performance results. See below and visit our website to read the full report.

**92% of tenants gave a positive response** to overall satisfaction with the services provided by Southdown.

**92%** of respondents were satisfied that we **listen** to their views and act on them.

**10 out of the 12 Tenant Perception scores have improved** year on year – in particular, how we listen to the views of tenants and our performance in repairs.

**96%** of respondents were satisfied that we treat tenants with **fairness and respect**.

**90%** of respondents who had received a repair in the last 12 months prior to the survey reported that they **are satisfied with the overall repairs service**.

**93%** of respondents were satisfied that we **keep them informed** about the things that matter to them as a tenant or shared owner.

**91%** of respondents were satisfied that their home is **well maintained**.

**75%** of respondents reported that they are satisfied that Southdown makes a **positive contribution** to the neighbourhood.

**92%** of respondents were satisfied that their homes are **safe**.

**86%** of respondents reported that they were satisfied with Southdown's approach to **handling anti-social behaviour**.

# Nigel's story

“ I’ve been a Southdown tenant for 22 years. Unlike other big housing associations, Southdown takes care of you. It doesn’t forget you.

I used to be a rough sleeper and lived in squats in London. I then lived in a council property in Lewes but there was black mould everywhere.

I was really happy when I moved. I have somewhere I can close the door and call home. If I didn’t have this flat, I’d probably be on the streets.

People shouldn’t feel shame about what they’ve been through. I’m an ex-alcoholic, I have diabetes, asthma, and other health problems. I was diagnosed with Klinefelter syndrome ten years ago which is very rare. I was also diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. You’ve got to find a way to live. Life’s too short otherwise.

Having the stability of this home means I can look after my mum nearby and maintain my friendships. I have lots of godchildren and meet people every day. I love it!

I’ve always been a helper. I like looking out for people. I’ve got all these talents and I’m finding ways to use them. Like popping round to make a cup of tea for a friend before their carer comes, building a garden that is wheelchair accessible, or helping someone paint their home.

It’s brilliant being a Southdown tenant. The staff are fantastic. They don’t judge you or patronise you. You can rely on them, they’re alert and know what’s going on. And they’re friendly and polite. I feel like I’m treated like a human being.”

**We are a specialist landlord of supported housing for around 470 tenants and shared owners across Sussex.**



# Client & tenant voice

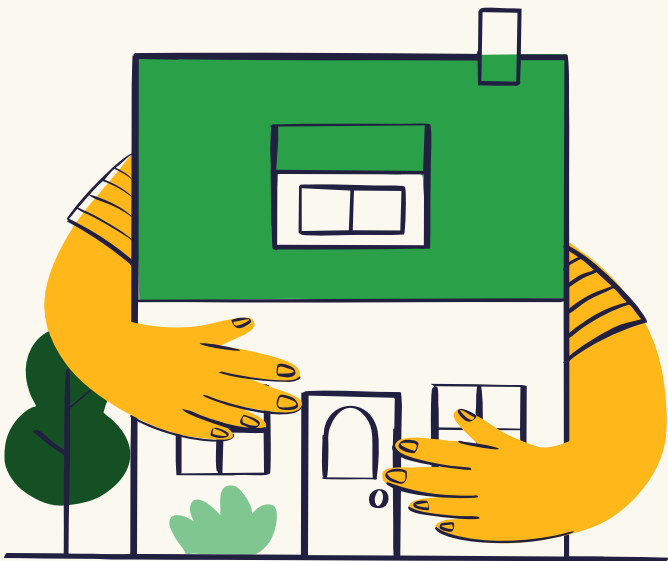
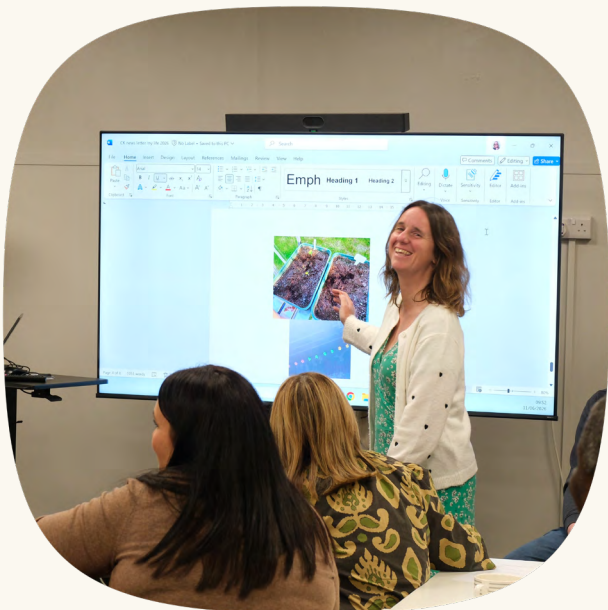
Making sure clients and tenants have a say in how Southdown services are run remains a key priority for us. During 2025-26, we continued to improve how we gather feedback and use it to make changes.

Our Annual Satisfaction Survey showed strong results, with 93% of people saying they feel welcome and safe, 92% saying they feel respected and understood, and overall satisfaction at 90%.

The feedback showed that people value the support they receive but also highlighted that some do not always see how their feedback leads to change. In response, we are working to improve communication about the actions we take.

Alongside surveys, we continued to involve clients and tenants through workshops, conversations and co-production activities. Tenants helped review the Tenant Handbook and improve the complaints process, while others worked with staff on local projects and community activities.

Together, these developments are helping us build a stronger and more responsive approach, with lived experience and people’s voices at the centre of service improvement.



**Our Working Together Charter and Client and Tenant Involvement Strategy guide us in delivering our promise to work with our clients and tenants, listen to them, and act on what they tell us. Read more on our website.**

# Southdown Beacon

## Our shared framework for delivering psychologically informed support.

At Southdown, we recognise that to truly support people, we must understand their emotional and psychological needs, and our own. The Southdown Beacon is our organisation-wide framework for doing just that.

Launched in 2023 and developed collaboratively across teams and services, the Beacon provides a shared foundation for support across everything we do. It centres around three key areas - Environment, Relationships, and Individual - each with three specific 'beams' of practice. Together, these nine beams guide how we listen, respond, and work alongside people with compassion, clarity, and consistency.

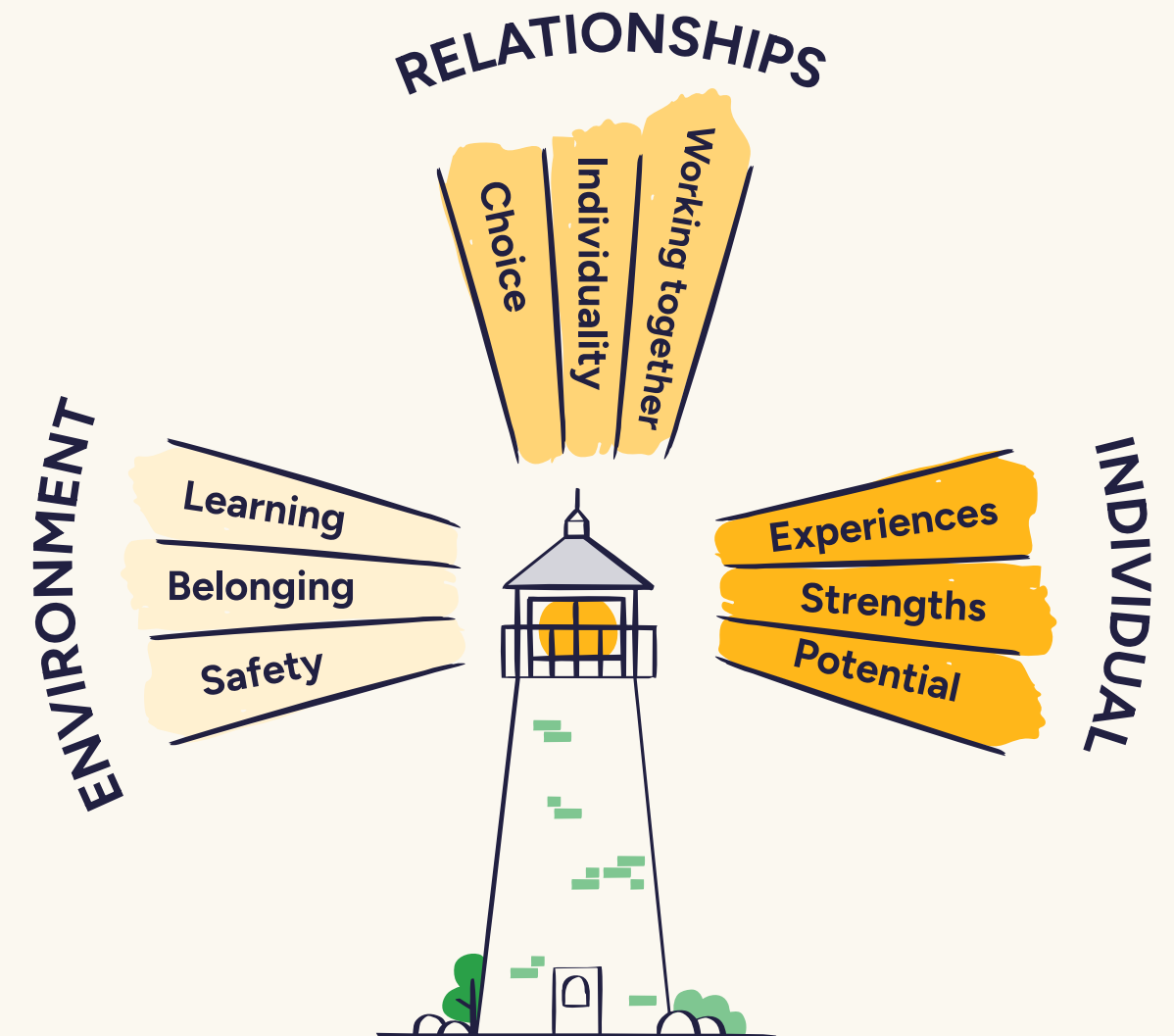
## How it supports what we do

The Beacon underpins how we deliver high-quality, person-centred care and how we create environments where people feel safe, seen, and supported. It strengthens our approach to joined-up care, supports workforce development, and connects everyday practice with our strategic ambition for inclusion, recovery, and independence.



## Embedding the Beacon

- **Knowledge Building** – We completed our suite of five Beacon e-learning courses by launching three more in 2025-26: Relationships (focusing on working together, choice and individuality), Strengths and Potential, and Environments (focusing on safety, belonging, and learning). The Beacon principles were also used to develop a new course for all our Mental Health and Housing Support staff: Developing Trusting Relationships and Professional Boundaries.
- **Service Delivery** – The redesign of our community mental health services was underpinned by the Beacon. This helped ensure the design promoted choice, belonging, individuality and learning for clients of services, while being delivered in a trauma-informed and strengths-based way.
- **Employee Experience** – We have included The Beacon in our Personal Development Review (PDR) process where staff are able to demonstrate how they have applied the Beacon to their everyday work. We also looked at the Beacon in our management development programme, helping managers understand how they can be effective managers in line with the Beacon principles.



## Shaping change together

Southdown continues to play an important role across the voluntary and community sector in Sussex. We work closely with the NHS, local authorities and partner organisations to help shape more joined-up and sustainable support services.

As a lead provider in community mental health, we support smaller organisations to thrive through infrastructure, partnership and collaborative delivery. We also work with partners across Sussex to develop more integrated ways of delivering mental health support.

Within learning disability services, we have continued to speak up for fair and sustainable funding to help ensure services remain safe and high quality.

**Most importantly, we remain focused on the people who use our services, making sure they feel safe, respected and involved in shaping the support they receive.**

# A great place to work

During 2025-26, our staff continued to deliver high-quality services while adapting to major changes across the organisation, including service redesign, growing demand and financial pressures.

**Our annual staff survey had a strong response rate of 58%.** Overall engagement fell slightly from the previous year, particularly within mental health services where teams are experiencing significant change. However, engagement remains above UK average levels, and staff continue to report strong pride in working for Southdown and strong support for our values.

The survey also showed areas where we need to improve, including communication, career development and making sure staff can see how their feedback leads to change.

In response, we are strengthening leadership and management support, improving communication and creating clearer opportunities for development and progression. These actions will help us build a strong, supported and resilient workforce as we continue to grow and change.



## During 2025-26:

- We were recognised as one of the UK's **Top 30 Employers for Working Families**, recognising our commitment to flexible and supportive working.
- We appointed an **Apprenticeships and Qualifications Lead** to strengthen learning and development opportunities and support clearer career pathways for colleagues across the organisation.
- We **renewed our Disability Confident Employer accreditation** for a further three years, reflecting our continued commitment to an inclusive and supportive workplace.

# Our finances

Despite rising costs, workforce pressures and uncertainty around long-term funding, Southdown has remained financially strong and stable. We have continued to plan carefully, respond positively to change and keep our focus on the people and communities we support.

This strong foundation means we can continue delivering high-quality services today while investing in our future.

We work hard to make sure our resources are used where they make the greatest difference - supporting people across Sussex and strengthening services for the years ahead.

**In 2025-26, Southdown's total income was £32 million.**



## Income 2025-26:

**£16.1m**  
Learning Disability

**£2.8m**  
Housing Support

**£7.3m**  
Mental Health

**£5.3m**  
Housing

**£423k**  
Lead Provider

**£43k**  
Other

# Looking 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 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.

Our priorities for the year ahead include:

- Expanding housing, including at least 20 new properties
- Delivering more joined-up services across housing, mental health and learning disability support
- Implementing our Learning Disability Strategy
- Embedding our redesigned mental health model
- Growing employment, volunteering and financial inclusion support
- Investing in leadership and workforce development
- Modernising systems, data and processes
- Developing new partnerships and collaborative models
- Pursuing growth in a disciplined and sustainable way

Southdown is in a strong position for the next phase of our strategy, with a clear focus on quality, resilience and helping more people feel safe, be well and live the life they choose.

Scan the QR code or [visit our website](#) to read the full plan.



## Thank you

Southdown's achievements this year have been made possible by the dedication, trust and partnership of the people and communities around us.

We are grateful to our staff and volunteers for the care, professionalism and commitment they show every day. We thank the people we support for the trust they place in us and for sharing their experiences to help shape and improve services for the future. We also thank our partners and funders for their continued collaboration and support.

Together, we have created positive change, strengthened communities and built strong foundations for the future.

We look ahead with confidence, ambition and optimism for all we can achieve together in the years to come.

**Thank you.**

## **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).