

Southdown



Complaints Annual Review 2025-26

Introduction

This report summarises the client and tenant complaints received during 2025-26. It highlights numbers and types of complaints and gives an insight into emerging themes and issues.

We delivered services to over 11,000 people during the year 2025-26. Whilst delivering a quality service to our clients and tenants is at the heart of what we do, we recognise we don't always get it right. We welcome complaints and encourage clients and tenants to provide feedback. Our learning from complaints supports our ongoing review of services and helps us identify how we can improve the experience of clients and tenants.

Southdown is both a care and support provider and a Registered Provider of Social Housing to tenants and shared owners. Our role as a landlord is overseen by the Board within the framework set for it by the Regulator of Social Housing. We are, however, committed to providing data to allow scrutiny of our performance across all of our operations. This review therefore details complaints received across the whole of our organisation during the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

We provide opportunities for people to share both positive and negative experiences with us. We encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Where possible, we take immediate action to put things right at the first point of contact, and where this is not possible, we operate a robust complaints procedure whilst continuing to seek a resolution of the client or tenant's concerns.

In addition to our complaints process, we have a range of other mechanisms that enable us to capture the experience of clients and tenants in order to drive forward improvements. These are detailed in the section "**Other methods for collecting feedback**"

Although Board members receive appropriate levels of detail on complaints and complaint handling, some of the details of complaints in this report have been generalised to protect the anonymity of clients, tenants, colleagues or members of the public involved.

At a glance

- 32 complaints received during 2025-26
- 75% of Stage 1 complaints responded to within target timescales
- 100% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within target timescales
- Most common themes were support provided and communication

- No complaints relating to discrimination were received
- Learning from complaints has informed improvements across Southdown

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

Our handling of complaints relating to our landlord functions is dictated by a framework set by the Housing Ombudsman (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>). The Ombudsman has continued to refine its Complaint Handling Code (<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>) - a framework for the management of, and learning from, complaints - and requires landlords to self-assess against this on an annual basis.

See here for a [link](#) to Southdown's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint's Handling Code.

See [here](#) for further information on our performance as a landlord – including an overview of our handling of the complaints received in relation to its housing function.

We acknowledge the good practice outlined in the Code and have proactively adapted our policies and procedures to reflect its core principles. To provide consistency and quality in complaint handling and service improvement across our diverse range of operations, we have adopted the Ombudsman's code across all our operations.

Our Complaints Process

We operate a two-stage complaints procedure in line with the Housing Ombudsman's code, although tenants have the right to approach the Ombudsman at any stage in the process:

Stage 1:

- On receipt of a complaint, an investigating manager is nominated, and they will send a Stage 1 complaint acknowledgement letter to the complainant within 5 working days.
- The investigating manager carries out the investigation. The focus at this stage is to work with the client towards a resolution.
- Once they have completed their investigation, the investigating manager will inform the complainant by telephone where appropriate, and in writing,

of the outcome of their investigation. They will normally do this within 10 working days, however if they need more time, they will let the complainant know. Their response will also include any actions taken or planned.

- If the complainant is not happy with the outcome of the investigation, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2:

- A senior manager is allocated to undertake the Stage 2 review. They will send a Stage 2 complaint acknowledgement letter to the complainant within 5 working days.
- Their role is to review how the complaint was handled and whether more could have been done.
- Once they have completed their review they will write to the complainant to let them know the outcome. This includes letting them know whether they agree with the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint investigation and whether further action is needed. They will normally do this within 20 working days, however if they need more time, they will let the complainant know.
- Their written response will also include who the complainant should contact if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the review. For tenants, this is the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaints Overview

Complaints Received

Function	2025 - 2026		2024 - 2025	
	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints
Housing Management	3	0	2	1
MHHS	19	5	17	6
Learning Disabilities	10	0	1	0
Total	32	5	20	7

A total of 32 complaints were received across all of our operational areas. Seven of these were escalated to Stage 2.

There were three complaints relating to our housing operations during the year. This represents a small increase on the previous year; however, none of the complaints were escalated to Stage 2.

While complaint levels within MHSS have remained broadly unchanged, the Learning Disability service received more complaints than in the previous year.

Complaint Volumes

Function	2025 - 2026		2024 - 2025	
	Total no. of clients	% of all complaints received	Total no. of clients	% of all complaints received
Housing Management	514	5	516	5
MHHS	10,393	94	11,043	94
Learning Disabilities	168	1	166	1
Total	11,075		11,725	

Complaints by service area remain broadly representative of their proportion of the overall client and tenant population. Total client and tenant numbers decreased by 5.5% compared with the previous year. During the same period, the number of complaints received increased from 20 to 32, representing a 60% increase.

While complaint volumes have increased, this may partly reflect greater awareness of our "Have Your Say" approach and the opportunities available for clients and tenants to share feedback.

Complaints Categories

(Note: More than one category can be assigned to a complaint)

Complaint Type	Current Reporting Period		Previous Reporting Period	
	No. of Complaints	As a % of complaints received	No. of complaints	As a % of complaints received
Service/support not been provided to a reasonable standard	10	31%	7	35%
Communication (or lack of) from Southdown	5	17%	7	35%

The behaviour or conduct of someone representing Southdown (staff or contractors)	4	13%	12	60%
Physical environment, e.g. not safe or clean	0	0%	0	0%
Service stopping or changing	3	9%	0	0%
We said we were going to do something, and we didn't	3	9%	0	0%
Complainant did not feel safe	3	9%	0	0%
Impact on neighbour, community or member of the public	3	9%	1	8%
Confidentiality/data protection	1	3%	0	0%
Handling of ASB reports	0	0%	0	0%
Handling of maintenance or repairs	0	0%	2	10%
Nuisance	0	0%	0	0%
Discrimination	0	0%	0	0%
Other	0	0%	2	10%

The most notable changes in categories of complaints are a decrease in complaints about staff behaviour. There were no complaints about the handling of maintenance or repairs, compared to 2 complaints last year.

Complaint Outcomes

STAGE		Current reporting period 2025 - 2026			Previous reporting period 2024 - 2025			
	Total	Resolved /Upheld	Partially Resolved /Partially Upheld	Not Resolved/ Not Upheld	Total	Resolved /Upheld	Partially Resolved /Partially Upheld	Not Resolved/ Not Upheld
Stage 1 Outcome	32	15 (47%)	12 (37%)	5 (16%)	19	4 (21%)	8 (42%)	7 (37%)
Stage 2 Outcome	5	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	6	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)

47% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1, compared with 21% last year. This shows positive progress and reflects our focus on listening to concerns and finding solutions as early as possible.

Response Timescales

STAGE	Current reporting period 2025 - 2026			Previous reporting period 2024 - 2025		
	No. of complaints	Missed deadline	% met target	No. of complaints	Missed deadline	% met target
Stage 1	32	8	75%	20	13	35%
Stage 2	5	0	100%	7	2	71%

The required timescale to respond to a complaint is 10 working days at Stage 1 and 20 working days at Stage 2. Extensions can be agreed where needed.

Complaint response times improved significantly during the year. At Stage 1, 75% of complaints were responded to within the agreed timescale, compared with 35% last year. At Stage 2, all complaints were responded to on time, up from 71% in the previous year. Where extra time was needed to gather information, this was agreed with the client or tenant, and all revised deadlines were met.

Satisfaction with Complaint Handling

Complainants are asked the following questions two weeks following closure of the complaint, using the communication method they have expressed a preference for, e.g. email or telephone:

- Did you feel there were any barriers to making the complaint?
- Did the person dealing with the complaint understand?
- Do you feel the complaint was dealt with respectfully?
- Were the letters and communications clear?
- Were you satisfied with Southdown's response?
- Have you got anything else you would like to add?

Response Outcomes

STAGE	Current reporting period 2025 - 2026			Previous reporting period 2024 - 2025		
	Client satisfied with our response			Client satisfied with our response		
	Total no. of responses	Yes	No	Total no. of responses	Yes	No

Stage 1	9	3	6	15	5	10
Stage 2	0	1	1	7	3	1

Fewer satisfaction surveys were returned this year compared with last year. However, the feedback received suggests that around half of clients and tenants were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, which is broadly in line with the previous year.

Increasing the number of survey responses remains a priority. We will be working with the Client and Tenant Complaints Scrutiny Panel to understand how we can encourage more feedback and ensure our surveys are easy to complete, accessible, and ask the right questions.

What complaints told us this year

The highest number of complaints received during the year came from our Mental Health and Housing Support Services, which was similar to the previous year. We also received a small increase in complaints from tenants, although none progressed to Stage 2 of our complaints process.

The most common reason for people raising a complaint was concerns about the standard of support they had received. These complaints often reflected situations where people felt their needs had not been fully met. Communication was the second most common theme, with some people telling us they had found information unclear or that communication could have been more timely or easier to understand.

We are pleased to report that, as in the previous year, no complaints were received relating to discrimination. This reflects our ongoing commitment to creating accessible, inclusive services and ensuring people understand the support and services available to them.

Key themes identified during the year

- The importance of clear, timely and respectful communication
- The need for consistency in how services and processes are delivered
- Resolving concerns as early as possible
- Supporting staff to make confident decisions in complex situations

Housing Management

Three complaints were received within Housing Management during the year. The main themes related to support during tenancy move-ins, communication and the delivery of services by contractors.

Learning from these complaints has helped us strengthen our tenancy move-in processes, improve communication with tenants and further develop arrangements for monitoring contractor performance.

We also resolved a concern about contractor conduct quickly through our service request process, demonstrating our commitment to addressing issues as early as possible.

Learning and improvement

We regularly review complaints across all our services to identify learning, improve people's experiences and help prevent similar issues arising in the future. This includes reviewing themes at organisation-wide meetings, where actions are agreed and learning is shared.

During the year, learning from complaints has informed a range of improvements across Southdown, including changes to how we communicate with clients and tenants, providing clearer information about services and processes, and ensuring concerns raised with us are addressed as early as possible.

We will continue to strengthen how we learn from complaints by improving our reporting and analysis. This will help us better understand people's experiences, identify opportunities for improvement and ensure that feedback continues to inform the development of our services.

Housing Ombudsman Cases

One case involving the Housing Ombudsman was concluded during 2025-26.

The Ombudsman found no maladministration by Southdown in relation to the matters investigated and did not identify any failures in our handling of the complaint. The outcome recognised Southdown's commitment to working with tenants to resolve concerns and take a resolution-focused approach wherever possible.

Self-Assessment

We follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code when managing complaints about our housing services. The Code sets out good practice for handling complaints fairly, resolving issues quickly, and learning from feedback.

Each year, we review how well we are meeting the requirements of the Code and identify any areas where we can improve. Our review for 2025-26 found that we are compliant with the Code.

Improvements made since the previous self-assessment:

- Information about how people can make a complaint is now regularly included in our tenant and client surveys

Areas for Further Improvement:

- Develop an easy read complaints leaflet to make information about our complaints process more accessible for clients and tenants.
- Improve how we monitor and report on complaints to help us identify trends and learning opportunities.
- Develop and deliver e-learning and additional training for managers to support consistent complaint handling and a resolution-focused approach.

Other methods for collecting feedback

During 2025/2026, in addition to insights gained from complaints, we used a range of methods and initiatives to gather client feedback, requests, and suggestions. These approaches varied in focus and style, ranging from informal conversations to structured, formal mechanisms. All feedback was reviewed by managers and played a key role in shaping service development and improving our communication with clients.

- Programme of activities coordinated by our dedicated Client and Tenant Involvement Lead
- Client and Tenant Involvement Groups
- Annual Tenant Visits
- Tenant meetings
- Client Participation Groups: clients receiving support from the same service meet regularly and discuss what is important as a Southdown client and what can be done to improve support
- Open days and events arranged locally by services
- Client House meetings (LD Services and some Supported Housing Schemes)
- Feedback directly to front-line workers or managers
- Southdown Feedback Form, available from staff, on our website, or locally within services
- Service-specific End of Service surveys
- Southdown Annual Satisfaction Surveys
- Commissioner-led service reviews and surveys

- Site visits, observations, and feedback from staff, families, and other stakeholders
- Scrutiny exercises: clients and tenants contribute to various reviews of Southdown's performance, including complaints performance

Response from the Board

Summary of Board response

As Southdown's Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), I have reviewed Southdown's Annual Review of Complaints and Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code. I am satisfied that the self-assessment provides an accurate reflection of Southdown's complaint handling arrangements and demonstrates compliance with the Code.

Complaints provide a valuable opportunity for Southdown to hear directly from the people who use our services and live in our homes. They help us understand where we can improve, and whether the changes we make are delivering meaningful benefits for clients and tenants.

The annual report highlights several encouraging outcomes during 2025/26, including improved response times, an increase in the proportion of complaints resolved at Stage 1, and improvements informed by learning from complaints. The report also identifies further improvements, including the development of an easy-read complaints leaflet, enhanced complaints reporting and analysis, and additional training for managers.

I am satisfied that the Board has received appropriate assurance regarding complaint handling performance during 2025/26 and that Southdown is committed to learning from complaints, addressing concerns fairly and transparently, and continuously improving the services we provide.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all clients, tenants, shared owners, advocates and family members who took the time to provide feedback during the year."

-Simon Anderson, Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

For the Board's full response, see link below

[Board's response in full](#)

Conclusion

Feedback from clients and tenants, including complaints, continues to play an important role in helping us improve our services.

During 2025-26 we saw improvements in complaint response times and a greater number of concerns being resolved at the earliest stage of the process. Complaints also provided valuable insight into areas where we can continue to improve, particularly around communication, consistency and ensuring people feel heard.

We remain committed to learning from feedback, responding openly and fairly to concerns, and working with clients and tenants to improve the quality of our services.



