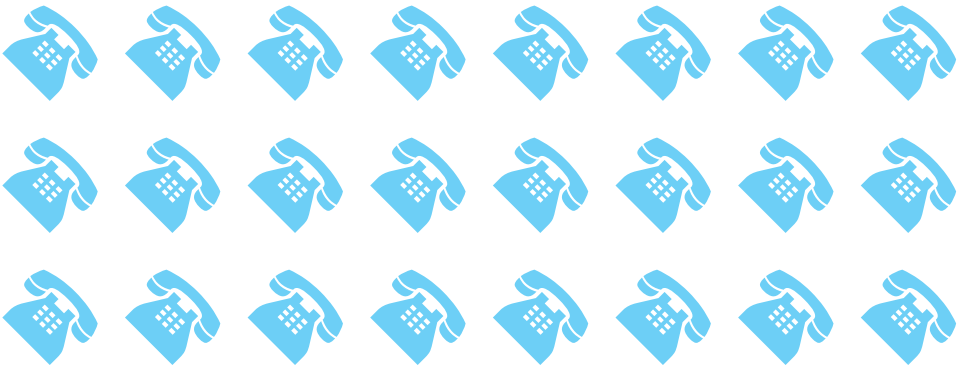


# You and South Wight HA

Keeping you in touch with our services



- Our service promises
- How we keep your details private
- When we pay compensation
- How to contact us
- How to complain
- How we keep you informed

# You and Southern Housing Group

|            |                                  |    |
|------------|----------------------------------|----|
| <b>p3</b>  | <b>Our Service Charter</b>       |    |
|            | What you can expect from us      | 3  |
| <b>p4</b>  | <b>Contacting us</b>             |    |
|            | How you can contact us           | 4  |
|            | Meeting us in person             | 8  |
| <b>p9</b>  | <b>Complaints</b>                |    |
|            | What is a complaint              | 9  |
|            | How to make a complaint          | 11 |
|            | Housing Ombudsman service        | 13 |
| <b>p13</b> | <b>Compensation</b>              |    |
|            | When we pay compensation         | 14 |
|            | How to claim compensation        | 15 |
| <b>p16</b> | <b>Confidentiality</b>           |    |
|            | How we keep your details private | 16 |
|            | Data protection                  | 17 |
| <b>p18</b> | <b>Keeping you informed</b>      |    |
|            | When we will ask your opinion    | 19 |
|            | How you can get involved         | 19 |

## Also part of the Residents' Handbook:

- You and your household
- You and your home
- You and your neighbourhood
- You and your rent



# Our Service Charter

## *What you can expect from us*

We have a Service Charter, which sets out our standards for delivering services to our residents.

Our overall aim is to provide you with efficient services that give value for money. We constantly monitor our performance, review our standards and ask your views, so that we can keep improving.

In this Residents' Handbook, we have included many of our agreed standards as 'Service Promises'. You will find them in blue boxes.

If you would like a full copy of our Service Charter, contact the Service Centre.

# Contacting us



## In this section:

You can contact us:

- by ringing the Service Centre on **0300 303 1772**
- by writing to us at **Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ**
- by sending an email to **[servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk](mailto:servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk)**

Alternatively, if you live in sheltered accommodation, you can ask your scheme manager for assistance.

## *How do I contact you?*

We run a one-stop Service Centre, which takes your calls from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Calls are charged at local rates.

Alternatively, you can write to the Service Centre or email us, but please phone if your query or the repair you are reporting are urgent.

When you ring the Service Centre, you have three options:

- press 1 to talk to the repairs contractor
- press 2 to talk to the income recovery team
- press 3 to talk to the resident services team.

## Repairs contractor

Contact the repairs contractor if you need to:

- report or check the progress of a repair
- tell us about any repair-related problem.



# Contacting us

## Income recovery team

Contact the income recovery team if you need to:

- ask about your rent payments
- pay your rent using a credit or debit card
- set up a direct debit to pay your rent
- talk to us about rent you owe
- get advice about Housing Benefit.

## Resident services team

Contact the resident services team if you need to:

- make changes to your tenancy
- ask about getting a move
- talk to us about anti-social behaviour or racial harassment
- get our permission (if you are an assured or secure tenant), to take in a lodger, make a home improvement or exchange homes with another social housing tenant
- ask about parking permits or other local schemes
- arrange to see a member of the housing management team
- make a complaint that isn't about a repair
- find out how to get involved in our work
- ask about any other matter to do with your home or tenancy.

Our teams will always try to answer your query on the spot. Or they will arrange for another member of staff to get in touch with you as soon as possible.

# Contacting us



## Our service promises

We promise, when you call the Service Centre:

- the person taking your call will tell you their name
- they will put the details of your call on our computer system
- they will say what further action we will take and how long it might take
- if you are calling about a repair, they will give you an appointment.



## Contacting us

### Our service promises

We promise, when you write to us:

- to try to reply to all letters within ten working days
- to tell you what action we are taking, or when we will be able to tell you what action we are taking
- to make our letters clear, easy to understand and written in plain English.

### English not your first language?

We use a telephone translation service to provide interpreters in over 100 languages. To speak to someone in your own language, call the Service Centre to ask for an interpreter. We will take your details and get an interpreter to phone you back, which will usually be within 15 minutes. We can then have a three-way conversation with the help of the interpreter.

If you need help at other times, perhaps at a meeting or when we visit you, we may send a member of staff who speaks your language. We can also provide our written information in different languages on request.

### Typetalk

If you have a textphone and you want to contact us, call British Telecom's typetalk service and type in the message you want passed on to us.

The typetalk operator will phone us to read out your message and can give you our response via your textphone.

# Contacting us



## *Can I meet you in person?*

We are happy to visit you at home. Call the Service Centre, who will get a member of staff to call you back to arrange it.

Our housing management team will also visit you at home to discuss ideas for your community. Again, call the Service Centre to arrange this.

You may also meet our staff at:

- estate inspections
- meetings or surgeries held at your scheme
- resident events.

### **Our service promises**

#### **We promise:**

- our staff will always wear ID, and be polite and professional
- if you are one of our disabled, older or housebound residents, we will make a home visit within three working days of you requesting it
- we will try to give you 24 hours' notice if we have to cancel or change a visit or appointment.



# Complaints

## In this section:

You can complain:

- when you are unhappy with our service
- by phone, in writing, in person, by email, or by calling the Service Centre and asking for our formal complaints form.

You can:

- use our simple complaints system
- take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman if you are still not satisfied.

## *What's a complaint?*

A complaint is when you tell us you are unhappy with our service – you define what the issue is. A complaint can be made by anyone, not just our residents. It can also be reported by someone on behalf of the person affected.

However, we will not treat it as a complaint if you are telling us, for the first time, that:

- a repair needs doing, or
- someone else is breaking their tenancy agreement.

In these cases, instead of taking what you tell us through our complaints system, we will follow it up in the normal course of our work.

# Complaints



## Our service promises

### We will:

- accept complaints in writing, by phone, in person, via the internet, by email, or on your behalf from another person
- when we are communicating with you, make it as convenient for you as possible, meet your individual needs and try to contact you in person
- assign a member of staff to manage your complaint and contact you within two working days to confirm:
  - the content of the complaint
  - the outcome you would like to see
  - their name and contact details
  - what will be done and how long it will take to investigate or resolve your complaint
- discuss with you the way we plan to resolve the complaint and, if we are planning to give you a goodwill payment, agree a figure that recognises the level of inconvenience or disturbance caused
- contact you to check if you are now satisfied and, if you aren't, offer you the opportunity to take your complaint further
- improve any service shown by your complaint to have shortcomings, write to let you know what we have done about it and promote the change to all residents
- ask you to tell us whether you were satisfied with the way we handled and resolved your complaint
- promise always to apologise when we've got it wrong.

## Why we value complaints

We aim to provide you with good quality services at all times and we are constantly working to improve them.

Your complaints are very important to us and we genuinely want to hear from you if you feel that we have got something wrong or failed to deliver a service to a high enough standard. The feedback you give us when you make a complaint helps us to improve our service in future.

We have also drawn up a list of service promises, to make it clear how we will work to provide you with a reliable, consistent and high quality complaints service. You will find our service promises opposite.

## *How can I make a complaint?*

You can make a complaint in the most convenient way for you. You might want to:

- talk to a member of staff
- phone the Service Centre
- send us an email
- contact us via our website
- write to us.

We still have a complaints form for people who prefer to write things down (call the Service Centre if you would like a copy), but we are just as happy to hear from you in any other way you choose.

We want to make it as easy as possible for all our residents to complain when they aren't happy with our service.

# Complaints



## What we will do

When we receive your complaint, we will contact you within two working days to let you know who will be handling the complaint and how long we think it will take to investigate and resolve it. We will ask what you would like us to do and give you contact details. We will confirm these things in writing.

If investigating your complaint is taking longer than expected, we will explain why. We will talk through our findings with you, either in person or over the phone. We will discuss the action we intend to take and confirm the details in writing.

We will take the agreed action and arrange to pay any compensation. We will then contact you to find out if you are satisfied and, if you aren't, offer you the opportunity to take your complaint further.

At the next stage, we will see you in person to review the case and agree what to do next. We will confirm the details in writing. If you are still unhappy, you can ask us to refer your complaint to our appeals panel.

When we believe your complaint is resolved, we will contact you to confirm that you agree, before closing the case and confirming this in writing.

This is the last stage of our complaints process, but if you are still unhappy you can refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service.



# Complaints

## *Housing Ombudsman Service*

If we fail to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you have the right to take it to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Please note that the Ombudsman expects you to work through our complaints process first.

Housing Ombudsman Service  
81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN  
Phone **020 7421 3800**  
Lo-Call **0845 7125 973**  
Minicom **020 7404 7092**  
Fax **020 7831 1942**  
Email **[info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**

# Compensation



## In this section:

You can claim compensation:

- when we have failed to provide services
- when you have suffered injury or loss that you believe is our legal responsibility.

## *When is compensation paid?*

We recognise that if we cause you genuine inconvenience or disruption it may be appropriate for us to offer compensation. We may wish to make a goodwill gesture to recognise that something has gone wrong.

When we are paying compensation, we will always contact you so that we can agree on the most appropriate form of compensation or goodwill gesture.

If we are going to make a payment, but you owe us money, we will agree a payment with you that reduces your debt and gives you an amount to compensate you for the loss of a service or amenity.

We will usually make payments by cheque. We can advise you about how to set up a bank account, if you need to.

## Damage to your belongings

If your personal belongings are damaged, we will ask you to give us details about the items, how they were damaged and any relevant dates and times. We will also ask you to send us any receipts or photos of the damaged items, if available.

Without prejudicing your legal rights, we recommend you make a claim for any damaged household items against your own contents insurance policy. If you do this, you could benefit from 'new for old' cover, whereas we can only agree a settlement figure after considering wear and tear and the age and condition of the items you are claiming for.

## Accident or injury

If you or someone else has been hurt or involved in an accident, we will ask you for details about how and when this occurred. We will ask to see signed statements from witnesses and supporting medical reports. We will also want to know whether you have claimed for any damages from your insurance company.

## *How do I claim?*

Contact the Service Centre for a compensation claim form. You will need to give us as much detail as possible, so that we can properly assess your claim.

You can't always claim on our insurance. It's important you read the insurance section of the **You and your home** booklet to make sure you're properly covered.



# Confidentiality



## In this section:

- We don't give your personal information to people who should not have access to it.
- We can let you see the personal information we keep about you, if you ask us.
- We are willing to update, amend or note on our records where you think we have the wrong information.

## *Do you keep our details private?*

We keep files on your tenancy, which include personal details about you and your household, so that we can carry out our job as your landlord. For example, we need this information to:

- order your repairs
- support your benefit claims
- assess your transfer request
- collect your rent
- advise on how much benefit you might be entitled to.

We keep these details confidential and we will not pass them on to another organisation unless:

- it is to do with your tenancy, for example, if we are helping you to claim Housing Benefit
- the law says we must, for example, we have to tell the local authority who is liable for Council Tax
- you give us permission.

## Data protection

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you are entitled to see the personal information we keep about you on file or on our computer system.

If you ask to see all the information we hold about you on all our systems this is called a 'data access request', we may charge you £10 in advance for providing this information and we have 40 days to provide the information.

If you only require specific information, then we can usually provide this information within 10 working days and without charge.

If you would like to request information, contact the Service Centre. Please make it clear what information you require.

We will contact you to acknowledge the request and arrange a suitable way for you to view the information, whether by appointment at our offices or by posting a print-out of all information to you.

We can't show you any confidential records supplied directly to us by a doctor or social worker, unless they give their permission.

If you think our records are wrong, you can ask us to update them. If we disagree, you can ask us to note your disagreement on the file.

# Keeping you informed



## In this section:

We will keep you informed about changes to our policies or organisation, using:

- newsletters, leaflets, letters and local notices
- our website
- meetings to consult you and get your opinions.

We will invite residents to sit on committees and other panels to influence the way we work.

We will keep you informed about how we run our organisation and any changes in our policies or ways of working that are likely to affect you. We will also give you information about changes in the law or benefits, and give you some local details.

We will give you this information:

- in this Residents' Handbook
- in **Open Door** residents' newsletter
- in estate newsletters and local leaflets
- on scheme noticeboards
- in neighbourhood agreements, which set out the services and service standards we will provide at your scheme
- on our website at [www.shgroup.org.uk](http://www.shgroup.org.uk)
- in our Annual Report for residents, and
- when we meet with you.



# Keeping you informed

If you call the Service Centre, we can also send you:

- full policy statements
- our main Annual Review and audited financial statements.

## *When will you ask my opinion?*

We have to consult residents if we are planning any major changes that will affect you.

We will consult you in person if the change affects you personally, for example, if we are going to refurbish your home.

We will hold local meetings and produce local leaflets or newsletters if we plan changes at your scheme.

We will consult groups of residents if we are planning changes to our policies or ways of working. We may also use surveys.

## *How can I get involved?*

We will actively encourage you to:

- tell us your views
- get involved in our work, and
- work with your neighbours and other local people.

# Keeping you informed



## Tell us your views

When you tell us your views, it helps us to:

- check our services are up to standard
- find ways to improve them.

We will ask for your views:

- by phoning you
- by asking you to complete questionnaires and surveys
- by asking you to contact us about specific issues
- by holding meetings
- by inviting you to join focus groups or working parties.

## Get involved

There are a number of ways you can get involved. We have included the ways that you can get involved locally in the **You and your neighbourhood** booklet.

There are also more formal ways to get involved.

**Main consultative panel.** This panel is made up of a small number of residents who are consulted on key services. Meetings are held regularly and members can put items on the agenda.

**Customer panel.** Residents can join the customer panel. By taking part in questionnaires and phone surveys from time to time, you will provide us with valuable feedback. Becoming a customer panel member means that your views will help improve our services. You can do this from your own armchair, which is ideal if you don't want to go to meetings.



# Keeping you informed

**SWHA Board.** Residents are represented on SWHA's Board, which is responsible for overseeing the work and direction of the organisation.

## Work with your neighbours

You will find more details about your local involvement options in the **You and your neighbourhood** booklet.

## Our resident involvement resources

We have a community involvement worker to help you get involved, as well as publications on resident involvement. We take steps to make sure that all your communities are represented.

We can also offer, where appropriate:

- travel, childcare and meal expenses
- help with your phone bills
- access to training courses
- support to formal resident groups
- help to access grants from local and national organisations
- support at meetings for residents whose first language is not English.

For more details about our resident involvement work, call the Service Centre and ask for the Community Involvement Worker.

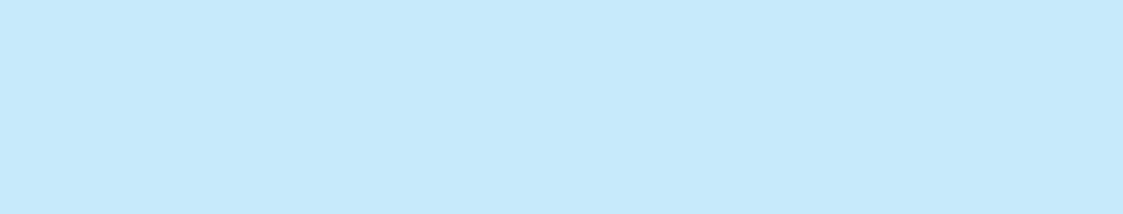
# Keeping you informed



## Our service promises

### We promise:

- to keep you informed
- to ask your views
- to give you the chance to get involved in our work in a range of different ways
- to listen to you, work with you and give you choices wherever possible.



Phone us on **0300 303 1772**, 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday (calls are generally charged at local rates)

Write to us at **Service Centre, Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ**

Email us at **service.centre@shgroup.org.uk** or **service.income@shgroup.org.uk** or **swha.repairs@shgroup.org.uk** (but please phone instead if the matter is urgent)

In an emergency, call the Service Centre during opening hours. When the Service Centre is closed, phone Wightcare on **01983 821 030**

Visit our website at **www.shgroup.org.uk**

For help with translations or if a large type, Braille or audio summary would be useful, please contact the Service Centre.

### **Arabic**

لمساعدتك في الترجمة يرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة على هاتف 0300 303 1771.

### **Bengali**

অনুবাদ সাহায্য পেতে হলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারে 0300 303 1682 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

### **French**

Si vous souhaitez recevoir de l'aide avec vos traductions, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

### **Somali**

Wixii ah caawimo turjumaan ka soo wac Xarunta Adeegga telefoonka 0300 303 1771.

### **Spanish**

Si necesita que le ayudemos con alguna traducción, llámenos al 0300 303 1771.

### **Turkish**

Tercüme konusunda yardım için 0300 303 1683 'den Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.