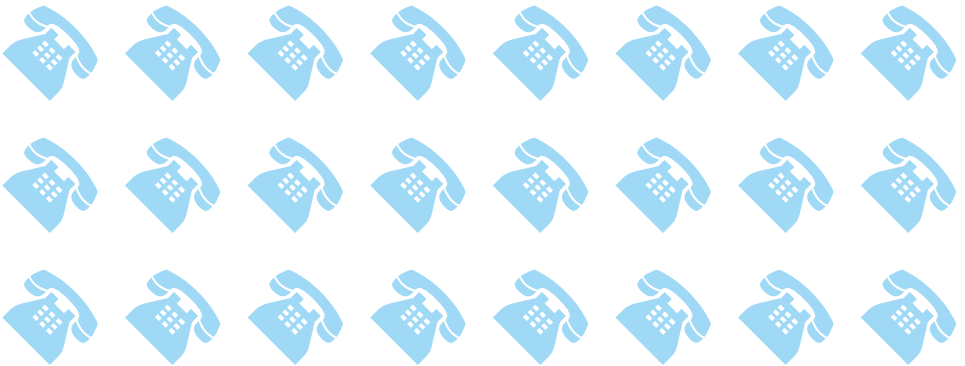


You and Southern Housing Group

Keeping you in touch with our services



- Our service standards
- 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

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Our service standards

What can I expect from you?

We work to an agreed set of standards when we are providing you with services.

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. We will provide you with annual reports that compare our performance to the standards we expect.

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

If you would like information on all our standards, go to our website, or contact the Service Centre for a copy of **Our service standards**.

Also part of the Residents' Handbook:

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

Contacting us



In this section:

You can contact us:

- by calling the Service Centre on **0300 303 1771** if you live on the UK mainland and **0300 303 1772** if you live on the Isle of Wight
- by writing to us at **Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ**
- by sending an email to **servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk**

How do I contact you?

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

You can also write to the Service Centre, email us or contact us via our website, but please phone if your query or the repair you are reporting are urgent.

When you call the Service Centre, you will be asked to select which service you require.

On the Isle of Wight only, we provide an enquiry service for residents and members of the local community who get care and support from us.

Otherwise, you are asked to choose between:

- repairs enquiries
- rent, ground rent and service charge enquiries
- all other enquiries.



Contacting us

Repairs enquiries

Contact the Maintenance and Repairs team if you need to:

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

However:

- if your query is about a gas repair, call our gas contractor (see our 'You and your home' booklet).
- if we have given you a direct number for our non-gas contractor in your area, you should call them direct.

Rent, ground rent and service charge enquiries

Contact the Income Recovery team if you need to:

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

Contacting us



All other enquiries

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
- 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 your resident services manager or officer
- make a complaint that isn't about a repair
- find out how to get involved in our work
- ask about any other home or tenancy matter.

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 standards

If you phone us, we will:

- answer 80% of phone calls to our Service Centre within 20 seconds, and
- use the time when you are on hold to let you know about the busiest and quietest calling times. Our response times may change depending on the level of calls we are receiving at the time of your call, so it would be unrealistic and unfair to you for us to commit to exact times for each call.

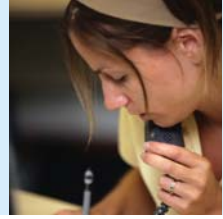
We will also:

- reply to direct-dial landline or mobile phone calls within six rings or offer the option for you to leave a voicemail message, and
- respond to messages left on voicemail within 24 hours, unless we give you another timescale.

If you email or write to us, we will:

- respond to your letters within 10 working days
- respond to your emails within five working days, or
- let you know who is looking into your enquiry and when you can expect a reply if we can't deal with it in that time.

Contacting us



English not your first language?

We use a telephone translation service to provide interpreters in over 150 languages. To speak to someone in your own language, call the Service Centre to ask for an interpreter. We can normally get a translator on the phone straight away. 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 or an interpreter who speaks your language. We can also provide our written information in different languages on request.

Text Relay

If you have a textphone and you want to contact us, call British Telecom's Text Relay service (which is the new name for typetalk) and type in the message you want passed on to us.

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

Our service standards

To give you equal access to our services when you are contacting us, we will:

- provide you with translation and interpreting services in our offices, over the phone, or when you write to us
- provide information in Braille, large print or as an audio copy.



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 your local resident services team to call you back to arrange it.

You may also meet our staff at:

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

Our service standards

If we visit your home:

- our staff and contractors will wear an identification badge at all times
- our staff and contractors will wear shoe covers inside your home if you want them to, and
- we will visit you at a convenient time for you and, wherever possible, offer you early morning or evening visits (between 8am and 8pm).

Contacting us



Our service standards

If you visit our main offices:

- our opening times will be clearly displayed
- our reception areas will be clean, tidy, display up-to-date information and provide toilets
- you will be met by a polite and professional member of staff who will be wearing an identification badge with a photograph, and
- you will be offered the option of a private interview room.

To give you equal access to our services when you are visiting our main offices, we will:

- provide access for disabled visitors
- provide you with the use of a hearing loop.



Our online services

In this section:

- You can access some of our key services by going to our website at www.shgroup.org.uk
- You will need to register to use the residents' section of the website.

What can I do online?

Our website at www.shgroup.org.uk provides:

- information and news about our organisation
- copies of our policies and publications to view or download
- details of the affordable homes we have for sale and the homes we have available for intermediate rent (designed for working people who cannot yet afford to buy a home).

As our resident, you can also register to use a number of online services. For example, you can:

- check your rent account
- pay online
- order a repair (but if your repair is urgent, you should phone the Service Centre instead)
- check your home's repair history
- give feedback on how your repair went, or comment on a communal repair

Our online services



- check the status of your transfer application
- report anti-social behaviour (but if the situation is urgent, you should phone the Service Centre instead)
- report an abandoned car
- make a complaint.

How do I register?

To register, go to www.shgroup.org.uk and click on 'Residents' login'.

At the login page click 'Register online'. You will need your rent account number and an email address – we have supplied links to three free email providers if you need to set up an email address first.

When you have completed our simple online form, we will email the details you need so that you can log on.



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.

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 standards to make it clear how we will work to provide you with a reliable, consistent and high quality complaints service.

Complaints



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.

How to 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 have a complaints form for people who prefer to write things down (call the Service Centre for 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.



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 the Group's appeals panel. It may be that a full panel is not necessary, but we will tell you if this is the case.

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.



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

Acceptable behaviour when you complain

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and efficiently, but we don't expect our staff to tolerate people who make unreasonable demands or who constantly harass them.

If, after taking into account the individual circumstances and the seriousness of the complaint, we decide that someone is behaving inappropriately, we will let them know their behaviour is unacceptable and ask them to stop. If they don't stop, we will take action to restrict their access to our offices.

Any decision to limit someone's access to our offices will be made by one of our directors. The decision will be designed to protect our staff, without over-reacting to the situation.



Complaints

For example, we might:

- ask that someone contacts us only in a particular way (for example, in writing)
- require that the person meets only with a named member of staff when visiting the office
- restrict phone calls to particular days and times
- ask the person to make an agreement with us about their future behaviour.

In every case, we will write to tell the person why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable, what action we are taking and how long it will last. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it.

If someone continues to behave unacceptably, we may decide to suspend all contact with them temporarily and stop investigating their service request or complaint. We will also seek legal advice.

When we take action against someone, we will always review it after a set period. Once someone's behaviour has improved, we will remove any restrictions and treat the person exactly as we treat all our other residents. We won't apply any sanction indefinitely.

Complaints



Our service standards

If we get it wrong, we will:

- give you an individual case reference number when you make a complaint
- investigate and let you know the outcome within a timescale we agree with you
- apologise and settle the complaint as quickly as we can
- give you the chance to fill in a satisfaction survey on how your complaint was handled and, when possible, let you know how we have learned from any of our mistakes, and
- clearly promote our complaints procedure on our website and in our written material.

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 do so.

Compensation



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.



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.

Confidentiality



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 it.

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.

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
- in our Annual Report to 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.

Our service standards

To stay in touch with you, we will:

- agree with you how often we produce and distribute your local newsletters
- produce and distribute three issues of our residents' publication 'Open Door' each year, and
- make sure our website is up to date and easy to use.

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.



Keeping you informed

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 (see the **You and your neighbourhood** booklet).

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.

Keeping you informed



Work with us

We aim to involve the widest possible range of residents in our work, so we provide lots of different ways for you to get involved. Some take up very little time, while others take more time and commitment.

For example:

- there are residents on the main Board of Southern Housing Group, as well as a number of our other committees
- residents help to oversee, monitor and inspect our services – Group-wide, regionally and locally
- we invite residents to comment on our publications, policies and ways of working
- residents advise us about the needs of particular groups.

For an up-to-date list of the ways you can currently get involved, go to our website to download **Getting involved**, our resident involvement menu – or call the Service Centre for a copy.

Work with your neighbours

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



Keeping you informed

Our resident involvement resources

We have specialist resident involvement staff 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
- grants for scheme-based projects, through our Social and Economic Regeneration department
- 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 a copy of our **Active Residents' Guide** or go to our website at www.shgroup.org.uk

Our service standards

To consult you, we will:

- be open about our work and ask for your opinions, using a wide range of methods
- show you how your views have improved our services, and
- encourage both tenants and leaseholders to become members of representative forums and groups.

Our Service Centre is open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.

If you live on the UK mainland, phone us on **0300 303 1771**

If you live on the Isle of Wight, phone us on **0300 303 1772**

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

Email servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk or serviceincome@shgroup.org.uk or servicerepairs@shgroup.org.uk (but phone if the matter is urgent)

Visit our website at www.shgroup.org.uk

This leaflet contains important information about the services you can expect from us. To request a copy in another language, in Braille or in audio format, or for more information, call 0300 303 1771.

Arabic

تتضمن هذه النشرة معلومات مهمة حول الخدمات التي يمكن أن تتوقع الحصول عليها منا. لطلب نسخة باللغة العربية أو بطريقة بريل أو بصيغة صوتية، أو للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات، اتصل برقم 0300 303 1771.

Bengali

আমাদের নিকট থেকে আপনি কী ধরনের সেবা প্রত্যাশা করতে পারেন সে সম্পর্কে এই প্রচারপত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য রয়েছে। বাংলা, ব্রেইল-এ বা অডিও ফরম্যাট-এর একটি কপি পাওয়ার অনুরোধ করার জন্য অথবা আরো তথ্যের প্রয়োজন হলে আমাদের সার্ভিস সেন্টার-এ 0300 303 1682-এ ফোন করুন।

French

Ce dépliant contient des informations importantes sur les services que vous pouvez attendre de nous. Pour demander un exemplaire en français, en Braille ou au format audio, ou pour en savoir plus, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

Somali

Macluumaad-sidahan waxaa ku jira war muhiim ah ee ku saabsan hawl-qabadyada aad naga filaysid. Si aad u dalbatid nuqul Soomaali ah, farta-indhoolaha (Braille) ama nooc dhagaysi ah, ama war intaas ka badan, wac 0300 303 1771.

Spanish

Este folleto contiene información importante sobre los servicios que puede esperar de nosotros. Para solicitar una copia en español, en Braille o en formato de audio, o para más información, llame al 0300 303 1771.

Turkish

Bu kitapçık bizden alabileceğiniz hizmetler hakkında önemli bilgiler içermektedir. Bu bilgileri Türkçe, Braille (kör alfabesi) veya sesli formatta talep etmek ya da daha fazla bilgi almak için 0300 303 1683 no.lu telefonu arayınız.