



Southampton City Council
Housing Service
Annual Report 2021/22

Tenant gardeners
showing pride in
their communities

Inside this year's report:

- Tenant satisfaction results
- Your home improvement priorities
- How we spend your rent
- Tackling tenancy fraud

Welcome...



from Claire Edgar

Executive Director
Wellbeing & Housing

Since starting as Executive Director in January it has been a hectic time getting to know Southampton, and getting involved in Housing matters. I have not yet had a chance to meet many of you but am hoping to do so in the coming weeks and I will be attending the Summer Housing Conference.

I hope to find the time to get out and about across the city in our neighbourhoods. I have done a walkabout around some of our city centre estates.

As tenants you are at the heart of those communities, and I hope you will continue to give us feedback so we can work together on the issues that matter most to you.

I know that the last year has been difficult for many of you, but it has been great to see how you have come together to support each other and your neighbourhoods, from gardening projects to helping to reduce loneliness. These initiatives are the things that turn houses into homes, and bricks and mortar into communities.

Despite the many challenges still ahead, we will do our best to deliver on the priorities we all have for housing in the city, investing in our homes and making improvements so that they are warmer, more energy efficient and fit for the future. We're also looking to deliver new homes across the city so that more of our residents can benefit from secure and affordable housing.

Of course, we will also be working hard to keep you, your home, and your community safe and secure. Please feel free to contact me or your Local Housing Office if you have any concerns.

Claire Edgar

Executive Director Wellbeing & Housing

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Tenants making a difference

The work of our Tenant Panels makes a real difference to the service you receive.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviews our performance figures, policies, and processes to pick up potential issues, and celebrate what is going well. They also support the council’s complaint procedure. In the last year, they have:

- Reviewed our green spaces commitments, tenancy sign-up packs and help agreements.
- Worked on property condition pilot and the maintenance recovery charges.
- Undertaken a stage 2 complaint.
- Started reviewing decorating vouchers/packs documentation.

Our Tenant Repair Panel work closely with our Repairs Team, which carries out over 50,000 repairs a year, to suggest areas for improvement. Among their activities, they have:

- Made improvements to the repairs section of our website.
- Contributed to our moving out standards and asset management strategy.
- Influenced how tenant satisfaction data is gathered.
- Visited our call centre to see the Team in action.

With responsibility for scrutinising our financial spending in relation to the Housing Revenue Account, the **Tenant Resources Group** make sure we deliver value for money. They have:

- Improved resident involvement in procurement.
- Participated in local and national consultations.
- Pushed for more energy efficiency works.
- Reviewed housing performance figures.

Our Tenant Inspectors are a small group of dedicated tenants who investigate different areas of the Housing Service, including:

- Council housing stigma in Southampton (and they delivered a training session on the subject for housing staff).
- Fly-tipping on estates.



Building strong communities



Our residents have been busy brightening up their neighbourhoods and showing pride in their communities, while we've been cracking down on those who show less respect for their neighbours.



Thanks to support from our Decent Neighbourhoods Programme, a group of green-fingered tenants have come together to improve their local surroundings in Bassett.

As most people living nearby have no outdoor space of their own, the garden at Leaside Way is a valuable asset. As well as brightening up the area, it provides a safe place for tenants to roll up their sleeves and have a go at gardening, growing their own plants and vegetables.

Since the Bizzie Bees garden club was established in 2019, the group has applied for grants and received money to buy a shed, water butt, garden tools and plants. Last year, they also installed a summer house using Community Chest Fund money.

Chair of Bizzie Bees, Vicky-Lee, said:

“The outdoor space has really helped to bring the community together and it was especially appreciated during the Covid lockdowns. In the future, we hope to plant palms and other plants to create a tropical theme and ensure the garden is easy to maintain. Plus, we have submitted an application for £10,000 of lottery funding to install solar panels on the roof of the summer house.”



The Love Where You Live campaign came to Harefield, where we partnered with SO18 Big Local to host a community engagement event on Bentley Green.

With waste disposal, littering and fly tipping ranking at the top of local concerns, this event was an opportunity for us to work with residents to tackle all three issues.

Over 40 organisations and departments came together, with an official opening taking place by the Sheriff of Southampton.

To address these issues the Police attended, talking to local residents and promoting correct reporting procedures, Neighbourhood Watch and PACT meetings.

We also had a litter picking marathon and voting for the best littering poster where the winner was announced by the Children's Mayor. Look out for the winning signs around the park soon!



Dealing with anti-social behaviour

From aggressive, noisy, or abusive behaviour to neighbourhood disturbances involving drugs or animals, anti-social behaviour takes many forms.

In the last year:

- We responded to 831 cases of anti-social behaviour.
- We served 13 Notices of Seeking Possession for antisocial behaviour.
- We referred 355 cases to NFS Mediation – this is an independent service we provide for dispute resolution. Of these 85% of all referred cases were either resolved/ improved or identified as not needing further action.



Our team of hard-working Junior Neighbourhood Wardens have been busy taking part in a range of community projects, activities and events, promoting a positive image of children in Southampton.

The group's summer activities included some Design Day events at Vanguard Road where the young people came along with their own design ideas for the mosaics produced in the local community. There was also playday at Hoglands Park where the group engaged with hundreds of children and their families.

Throughout the year, the Junior Neighbourhood Wardens also:

- Supported SCPA & HAF Playschemes at Christmas time, engaging with over 50 children and families per session.
- Ran Mini Medics first aid courses in Weston, Holyrood and Redbridge with 45 Junior Neighbourhood Wardens. The children learnt a variety of first aid techniques and left at the end of the day with a Certificate and a mini first aid kit.

If you've witnessed anti-social behaviour, please report it.

You can contact your **Local Housing Office** or use the online reporting form at southampton.gov.uk/housing.

For non emergency crime and anti-social behaviour call **101**.

If you are aged 11-16 and have information about crime, such as a drug dealer, someone who is exploiting young people, or carrying a knife, report it anonymously online at fearless.org.

Investing in people and homes

In 2021/22 we invested in 16,000 existing and new Southampton homes and neighbourhoods.



Careline

Careline offers peace of mind that support is available 24/7. Customers can call for help by pressing a button in their home, or on a pendant worn round their neck or on their wrist.

They are instantly connected to a member of our Careline team who can summon support by contacting a key holder, family member, the emergency services or the Careline response team.



£6.3m

Estate regeneration and new build (including Townhill Park, Starboard Way and Potters Court developments)



£6.4m

Improving the quality of homes (including roof replacements, 127 new kitchens and 140 new bathrooms, lift improvements)



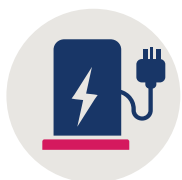
£15.4m

Making homes safe (fire safety improvements and structural works)



£1.3m

Supporting communities (Decent Neighbourhoods works and estate improvements)



£1.2m

Making homes energy efficient (190 new gas boiler and new electricity systems)

Additionally, we invested £2.4m on enabling residents to live independently, with disabled adaptations and increased access to our Careline service.

One of our tenants, Lynda says Careline is invaluable to her, telling us:

“It is vital for anyone like me who is susceptible to falls because you can get help straight away.”

Housing Management in numbers



Studio/1 bed

Numbers waiting
4,220 (approx. 1,500 age designated accommodation)

Average waiting time
3 years 10 months



2 bed

Numbers waiting
1,440

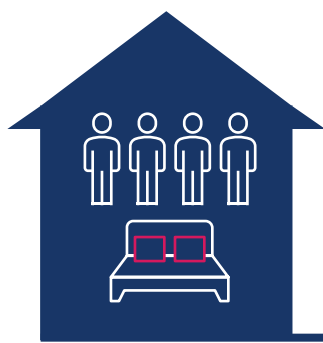
Average waiting time
5 years



3 bed

Numbers waiting
1,523

Average waiting time
11 years 5 months



4 bed +

Numbers waiting
325

Average waiting time
11 years 2 months

Tackling tenancy fraud

15 properties were returned following investigations by our Tenancy Fraud Team, saving **£630,000** and returning much-needed homes to the waiting list.

The Team also identified a further:

29 properties that were sublet

24 properties that were abandoned/unoccupied

£1,954,760

worth of savings from cancelled Right to Buy applications

Right to Buy applications

217 applications received

76 households subsequently went on to complete the purchase of their council home



Rent and repairs

Rent

Total revenue income 2021/22 financial year:

Service charges

£3m

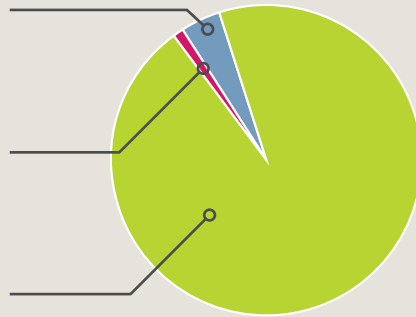
Shops and garages

£0.9m

Dwelling rents

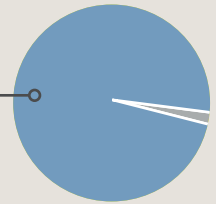
£71.1m

Total: £75m



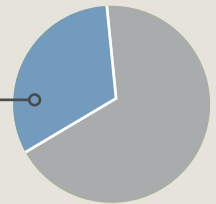
98.07%

of rent was collected against our income collection target



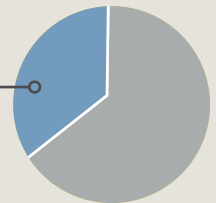
32.5%

of tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit



35.9%

of tenants are in receipt of Universal Credit



How we spend your rent

Lettings and homelessness **2p**

Central office cost **4p**

Other **2p**

Refuse collection and grounds maintenance **4p**

Finance costs **12p**

Tenant and neighbourhood services **15p**

Major works and capital programme **33p**

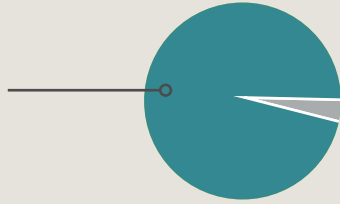
Day to day repairs **28p**



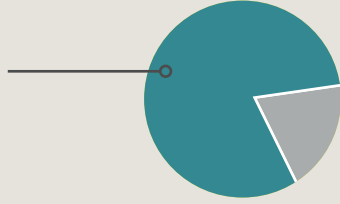


Repairs

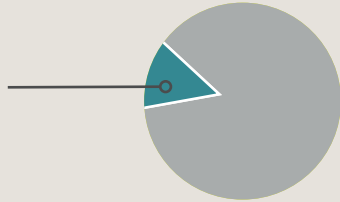
96.55%
Appointments kept



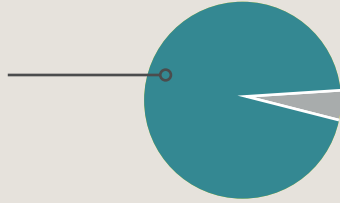
80.27%
Repairs completed on first visit



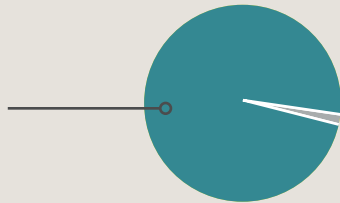
14.74%
Days to complete a repair



95.08%
Emergency repairs completed on time




98.41%
Properties with a gas safety check





Survey results

 **80.92%**

Satisfaction with repairs (of surveys completed)

 **83%** Satisfied with the ease of reporting the repair – this is up from previous years highlighting, with more tenants choosing to report repairs online

 **74%** Satisfied with being able to make an appointment convenient to them

 **77%** Satisfied with the repair being completed first time.

We realise that there is much more work that we need to do to improve our repairs service to you.



Tenant satisfaction results

We carried out an annual resident survey for the 2021/22 financial year.

We found that



72%

of residents are satisfied with the service they receive from us.



87%

are satisfied with the health and safety of their home.



86%

are satisfied that their rent provides value for money.



74%

are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.



81%

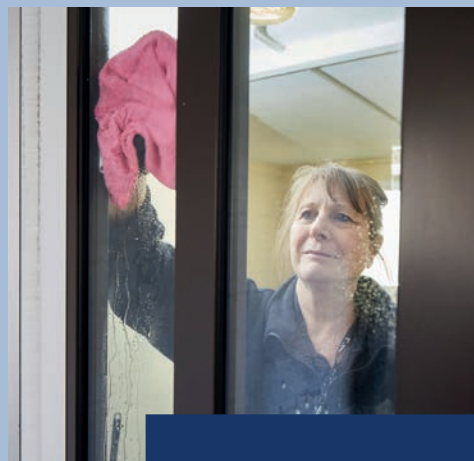
are satisfied with the advice and support they receive on paying rent and service charges.



Some of these figures are slightly down from previous years and we are continuing to work with our tenants and groups to find out how we can improve.

We received 221 complaints in the financial year 2021/22. Common themes were anti-social behaviour, and the standard of cleaning in communal blocks. As a result, we now carry out more inspections with residents on our estates and residents can volunteer to become a cleaning monitor for their block. We carry out regular audits.

We didn't carry out an annual resident survey for the 2022/23 financial year. This is because we were awaiting the outcome of Government consultation on new tenant satisfaction measures, which some of our local tenants were involved in shaping. The outcome of this consultation will form the basis of our surveys going forward.



What you told us

Farewell from **Steve Smith**



After almost 50 years working in the housing department, Steve Smith, Head of Stronger Communities, Neighbourhoods & Housing, is leaving Southampton City Council. Here, Steve shares his memories of the last four decades.

I joined the council in November 1974 as a Housing Management Trainee while I was studying for my housing qualification.

For six months, I learned the trade by working in every area of the department. It was a great experience and I particularly enjoyed going out and collecting rent door-to-door. There was no better way to see what was going on across our estates and meet tenants face to face.

I've been fortunate enough to work alongside some great people over the years, having managed the Housing Advice and Homelessness Teams, helped set up the Housing Benefits Team, and now look after Trades, the Local Housing Offices, Supported Housing, Stronger Communities and Tenant Engagement. I will miss them and many others I have worked with in other council directorates and organisations from across the city.

I am particularly proud of how we've developed the Housing Service, thanks to the involvement of tenants. I love working with tenants, taking part in estate walkabouts, and having lively discussion in your various groups. Sometimes we disagree, but the debates are always constructive and often lead to positive change.

I've had a wonderful time and it will be strange waking up on that first day and not having to go in to work!



“I send you my very best wishes for the future!”

Surviving the cost of living crisis

If you're struggling to make your income stretch to cover the spiralling costs of everyday items like utility bills, food and fuel, our Welfare Rights & Money Advice Team are on hand to provide personal, confidential money and debt advice especially for Southampton council tenants.

The team:

- Check you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to.
- Look at ways to help you manage your income and outgoings, as well as your debts and arrears.
- Assist you with drawing up a budget plan that will enable you to see exactly what your financial position is. This can also be used to help negotiate repayments with your creditors.
- Advise on the best options available to help resolve your debt problems

During 2021/22, the team:

- Gave advice on benefits and debt to over 2,644 Southampton residents by telephone, email and face to face and helped them to claim over £974,000.00 in previously unclaimed welfare benefits.
- Helped tenants find sustainable solutions to their debt problems which enabled them to get their finances back on track, resulting in over £278,000.00 of debts being written off by creditors.

Call **023 8083 2339**

Email **welfarerights.advice@southampton.gov.uk**

Visit **southampton.gov.uk/moneyadvice**

**Cost of living
information**



Need somewhere warm to go?

Southampton's libraries, housing with care schemes and family hubs are extending a warm welcome to residents who are concerned about the cost of heating their homes and need a safe place to go during this challenging time.

Please visit **southampton.gov.uk/costofliving** for a list of locations and opening times.