

TENANT INSPECTORS

Council Housing Stigma Report

**Southampton City Council
Housing Management**

October 2020–October 2021

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Acknowledgements

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We would like to express our gratitude to the Tenant Engagement Team who supported us, especially to Michael Farleigh who encouraged us throughout this inspection process.

The Tenant Inspectors for this inspection were: Ann Caddell, Magenta Catz, Dreena Hartup and Lynda Walton. Karen Whittaker & Dawn Chivers also contributed to the report.



The 2021 Tenant Inspectors

Summary

This report details the findings of the Tenant Inspectors who have looked into the subject of Council Housing Stigma; how Southampton City Council (SCC) tenants feel and what the council can do to help tackle this emotive subject.

As Tenant Inspectors, we assessed the subject using information we gained from interviews, surveys and reading reports.

From interviewing managers we could tell there was an awareness of potential stigma from most teams and a desire to reduce and challenge stigma as much as possible.

Not all teams and staff agreed there was stigma, and sadly some of these teams were in areas where staff and tenants felt they had been stigmatized.

While 68% of tenants surveyed said that they have not felt stigmatised by a member of SCC staff, there was a significant minority who had and lots of examples were given where tenants said they felt disrespected, or just ignored. We also had plenty of examples from staff of stigma shown to residents. This shows that this is a subject that cannot be ignored by the Council.

The Inspectors would like to say a big thank you to all staff and tenants who got involved in this inspection. It is much appreciated.

The Council's Housing Service could help challenge and reduce council housing stigma by:

- Increasing staff training to make them more aware of stigma, promoting active listening and delivering better customer service.
- Taking action regarding those minority of tenants who take liberties and cause antisocial behaviour which reinforces stigma.
- Investing more into our neighbourhoods.
- Considering possible stigma when creating or amending policies.
- Better reviewing of the work of contractors and trade staff to make sure it is done to the highest possible standards.

Introduction

The Housing Regulator encourages tenants to be involved in improving services. The scrutinizing, inspecting and monitoring of services by tenants are all recognised as good practice for landlords wishing to improve their services.

As Tenant Inspectors, customers are able to comment on where SCC are delivering a good service, and to suggest areas where they can improve and make recommendations. Working in this way can help the council improve their performance as well as increase tenant satisfaction and involvement.

Previous tenant inspections have included:

- Antisocial Behaviour
- Decent Neighbourhoods
- The Responding Service
- Welfare Rights & Money Advice
- Estate Walkabouts
- The Block Rep Scheme
- Customer Care

Stigma in Council Housing

The theme of Social Housing stigma is not new, but it's come to the forefront recently, which is why we Tenant Inspectors decided to look at the issue for Southampton tenants.

There was a national campaign set up in 2017 called "See the Person¹" to combat stigma associated with those who live in social housing. They wanted to set the story straight and see a more balanced representation and understanding of social housing and the people who live in it. It is not about subsidies - it's about people with somewhere decent to live having the time and resources to give back to society. They wanted to reflect the volunteering, work and community involvement they had all experienced.



1. SCC Tenants meet the then Housing Secretary Dominic Raab MP at a Housing Roadshow

Some Southampton tenants attended a Regional Housing Roadshow held on 25th January 2018 in Basingstoke with the then Housing Minister, Dominic Raab, to listen to the views of Social Housing tenants following

the tragedy at Grenfell Tower.

One of the key themes that came out of that session, and indeed all the sessions held across the country, was the feeling of stigma experienced by tenants from the media, the government, and their own landlords. There was a chapter on stigma in the Government's Social Housing Green Paper², though this was missing in its subsequent White Paper, which we felt was interesting.

There have since been a number of other reports regarding this subject, and we wanted to find out if SCC tenants felt stigmatised. If so, what could the council, as a landlord, do to help reduce these feelings of stigma?

We used the "It's Not Okay"³ guide by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) (published August 2020) as initial research to help us decide how we wanted to carry out the inspection.



2. Chapter header in the Government's Social Housing Green Paper: August 2018

¹ See The Person – It's time to end the stigma <https://seetheperson.org/>

² A new deal for social housing - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing>

³ It's Not Okay – a guide to tackling stigma in Social Housing. <https://www.cih.org/publications/its-not-okay-a-guide-to-tackling-stigma-in-social-housing>

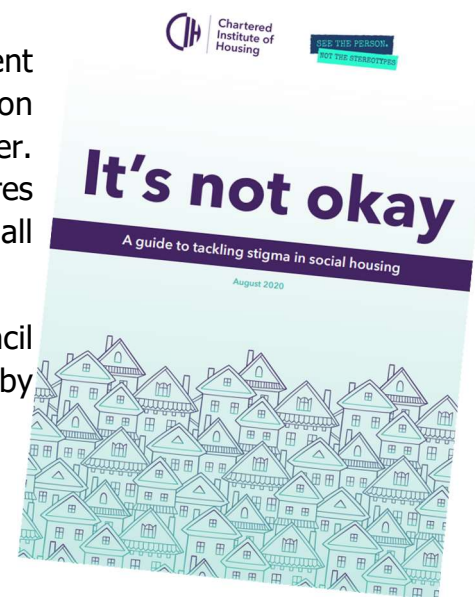
Methodology

Stigma is a really interesting topic as it is subjective and different people can see it in various ways. It is emotive, and what one person feels as stigmatization may cause another no offense whatsoever. Unlike other inspections, there were no facts or performance figures for us to look at and no policy documents to examine. Stigma is all about people's feelings.

To get an initial understanding of the issues of stigma within Council Housing, we read the "It's Not Okay" a document created jointly by the CIH and the See the Person Campaign.

There were some key paragraphs that really stood out to us:

3: an excerpt from page 5 of the It's Not Okay report



What matters?

Firstly, the challenge:

'Colleagues feel they know more about living in social housing than customers'

This section may be difficult to read, but it is important to listen to what tenants have to say about their experience with landlords and staff, and to understand how that contributes to their experience of stigma. Here, we pick up from the survey responses the most commonly reported areas that tenants wanted organisations and staff to recognise and tackle.

- Making assumptions about tenants

Such as that tenants are unemployed, on benefits, always at home.

'When signing up for the tenancy, it was assumed I was on benefits'

'Assuming single parents don't work and only claim benefits'

'The assumption that all tenants are scroungers'

The most common practical example given was the lack of appointments, or very broad timescales given for repairs and other visits. Respondents felt very strongly that this illustrates clearly that landlords expect tenants to be at home rather than working/ volunteering and so on and gives the impression that the landlord's or contractor's time is more valuable than the tenant's.

'Realise we don't all just sit at home 24/7. We have lives'

'Contractors turn up without appointment presuming we don't work'

'They assume that we are home all day so give 8am-6pm appointments'

'Not offering weekend/ out of hours repairs to people who work'

These were the view of tenants nationally and we wanted to discover whether the same feelings of stigma existed in Southampton.

We wanted to find out about the views on stigma of both staff and tenants and discover the work of different departments with Housing regarding their understanding about the subject as an issue and how they tackle it within their teams.

To plan the inspection, we decided which tools we could use to carry it out.

- Interview managers from different Housing Teams and other teams who support the housing service
- Survey tenants to get their view on stigma and whether they have been affected.

- Survey staff from housing teams to get their views regarding stigma.
- Look at the Tenants' Link E-Bulletin as an example of external communication.
- Look at good practice from other housing providers

Timetable

This inspection began during the COVID-19 lockdown and took place through the Video conferencing app Zoom. To help maintain concentration, our normal 2-hour meetings were reduced to an hour which meant that the length of time greatly increased.

Interviewing managers

We wanted to acquire an understanding from managers regarding the different areas of the service that make up the Housing department about their views and experience of stigma.

In the end we spoke to the following departments/teams:

- Allocations
- Communications
- Contact Centre
- Customer Payment and Debt
- Estate Regeneration
- Housing Management (from both Central and West)
- Housing Operations (Repairs)
- Neighbourhood Wardens
- Property
- Supported Housing

We drew up a list of various questions and chose the following:

- If I said the word 'stigma' to you, what do you understand this to mean?
- Are you aware of, or have you personally experienced, behaviour that you would associate with the effects or symptoms of stigma?
- Have you had to deal with any stigma related issues towards staff or clients in your job role?
- As part of your department training do you have leaflets or information available to staff relating to the issues of stigma?
- If this type of training is not available, do you think it would be beneficial to have information about stigma to assist your staff in their communication with their clients/tenants?
- Do you believe you create an environment within your department that enables your staff to approach you in confidence about stigma or other related issues?
- Do you feel there are any situations that your staff deal with that could create or dispel feelings of stigma in your client communication?
- If you were given the opportunity to make changes to policies surrounding all forms of stigma, what changes would you make? What would those changes achieve?

Not every interview followed this exact structure. Depending on the answers given some interviews went on slight tangents while others answered questions in previous answers.

- 1) If I said the word 'stigma' to you what do you understand this to mean?

Every manager we spoke to was fairly clear on their understanding of stigma. Common words that came up included 'negative', 'stereotype', 'making assumptions' and 'preconceived ideas'. Categorising someone based purely on thoughts was also mentioned.

It was pointed out that with Council Housing stigma, national media and social media do not help. Pictures on popular TV programmes do not portray a good image. Also, housing management staff can spend 80% of their time with the 20% of vulnerable tenants or those who cause antisocial behaviour. There was a feeling that stigma has increased over time and is a generational thing. This may be because, before the Right to Buy was introduced, council tenancies had a much greater cross section of residents living in them, rather than it just being considered 'social housing' as it is today. This impacted with increased demand and longer waiting lists.

- 2) Are you aware of, or have you personally experienced, behaviour that you would associate with the effects or symptoms of stigma?

We received lots of varied answers for this question. Some gave experiences from their own life where they have been the victim of racism. Others mentioned having worked with people in squalor and seeing them being 'put into boxes' rather than dealt with as individuals. One person used the expression "There but for the grace of God go I."

- 3) Have you had to deal with any stigma related issues towards staff or clients in your job role?

"In a tower block it can appear that people don't care, but often it's just 2 or 3 residents that spoil the block for the majority, while the rest just want to lead a quiet life. Sometimes we need to remind other residents of this, & sometimes staff too."
Quote from a manager

Two spoke about incidents they had seen within their teams where they needed to confront colleagues and address the issue. A number of managers mentioned stigma from tenants and residents coming in with the attitude that 'The council won't listen' or when decisions are set by rules from central government etc. Some managers pointed out that a number of staff live in social housing, so it improves their understanding of customers from both points of view.

Some managers were of the opinion that there was no stigma regarding social housing and that there were no negative connotations, whilst another admitted that even his daughter said that 'She is too good for social housing'.

We were pleased to hear that new builds are 'tenure blind' and all built to the same standard regardless of whether they are social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership etc. This helps to reduce stigma in new communities.

- 4) As part of your department training do you have leaflets or information available to staff relating to the issues of stigma?

Most managers confirmed that regular equality and diversity e-learning was carried out by staff, but there was no mention of the stigma of social housing. Some explained that they carried out a briefing session on the White Paper for their team which contained awareness on stigma. Domestic Violence training was also mentioned. Some departments meet for team briefs to talk about different subjects but not on stigma. They stated that they would be willing to consider adding the stigma issue to future training.

Teams such as the Contact Centre spend a lot of time promoting active listening and putting themselves in the customers' shoes.

- 5) If this type of training is not available, do you think it would be beneficial to have information about stigma to assist your staff in their communication with their clients/tenants?

Other than those managers who do not think there is an issue with stigma, all thought that training on stigma would be useful, while some noted it was sad that it was needed. Having tenants directly involved with this training would be beneficial.

It was mentioned more than once that the council needs to consider the barriers it is putting up. – i.e., there is an impenetrable wall where residents cannot get through to speak to the relevant departments as direct phone numbers are no longer accessible. Not all tenants are online (due to cost, training or ability) and some have great difficulty using the automated voice recognition system.

Additional training would help change the ethos. More professionalism would create a better culture. The CIH has a code of ethics which is good.

- 6) Do you believe you create an environment within your department that enables your staff to approach you in confidence about stigma or other related issues?

We are pleased to say that all managers said yes to this question. Some teams stated that they operate a 'safe space' where managers actively encourage staff to discuss any issues.

- 7) Do you feel there are any situations that your staff deal with that could create or dispel feelings of stigma in your client communication?

Listening was a key skill that came up time and time again to reduce stigma, as was increasing communication. Giving good customer care was also mentioned. Building up trust with tenants is much more likely to deliver positive results when having to engage in difficult conversations.

“Building up trust with tenants is much more likely to deliver positive results when having to make difficult conversations.”
Quote from a manager

“Good neighbourhood competitions” were mentioned as a potential controversial/negative issue as they could create division. Improving estates was mentioned as a good thing but even that could stir up trouble as in the recent article on the murals at Millbrook towers on the Daily Echo comment board⁴.

It was mentioned that, due to the scarcity of social housing, a higher percentage of vulnerable tenants are often being housed in close proximity (especially in Supported Housing) which can increase tensions and stigma in a certain area or group. For example, due to confidentiality it can be difficult for staff to explain to other tenants about potential support plans or actions in place to reduce antisocial behaviour.

It was also mentioned that generally Council Housing is instantly recognisable in an estate which does not help stigma. More variation in colour schemes to make blocks a little less uniform could help this.

Offering more information to tenants was suggested to help them understand the purpose of Council Housing and what the council as a landlord can and cannot do.

⁴ [Sprinklers stop Millbrook Tower fire before it spread | Daily Echo](#)

8) If you were given the opportunity to make changes to policies surrounding all forms of Stigma what changes would you make? What could those changes achieve?

Lots of different ideas came up including:

Build more council homes. The more people that live in council homes, & experience living in council accommodation, the less stigma there is. As council housing has declined, while demand has increased, that frustration has led to increased stigma.

Quote from a manager

- Additional staff training and improving staff's professionalism.
- Encouraging staff to be more confident in challenging stigma.
- When creating equality assessments, make them simpler and put the customer first. Also include a section on stigma to make sure that it is a consideration when developing new policies etc.
- Building more council housing and investing more in improving neighbourhoods.

- Ensure more teams and their contractors consider the actions they take and the effects they may have on tenants. For example, a scaffolding contractor just ripped up a resident's rosebush to install the scaffolding without talking to the tenant first.
- Be more open and apologize when things go wrong.
- Invite residents to the composition and editing process of pilot letters to help ensure that the right message is conveyed.
- Make policies and strategies more available and accessible so that residents and staff are aware and can be held to account.
- Better communication regarding what all departments can (and cannot) offer to improve the understanding of tenants about the different areas of the housing service.

Our thoughts and recommendations:

We were very grateful for the managers' openness and candidness when speaking to us, and we appreciated it when they acknowledged their staff may have portrayed instances of stigma in the past.

We did find it concerning that some managers refused to see that Social Housing Stigma may be an issue, especially when those areas (such as major works and dealing with contractors) have been pointed out nationally as where stigma might be prevalent.

We were impressed with the work carried out by some departments that encourages active listening and feel this should be extended to all teams. Unconditional Positive Regard training could also be really useful to staff to help tackle stigma.

Unconditional Positive Regard⁵ is about approaching each and every conversation with no preconceived ideas, thoughts or answers. Even if you have had the same

⁵ For more information on Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) please see our information sheet in Appendix 1. This statement regarding UPR is © Magenta Catz

conversation 100 times with 100 different people you have to look at it as if it's the first time you are having it.

We liked the ideas put forward by managers to address stigma and, while some of them are outside of the council's control, others could be achieved with minimal cost/effort.

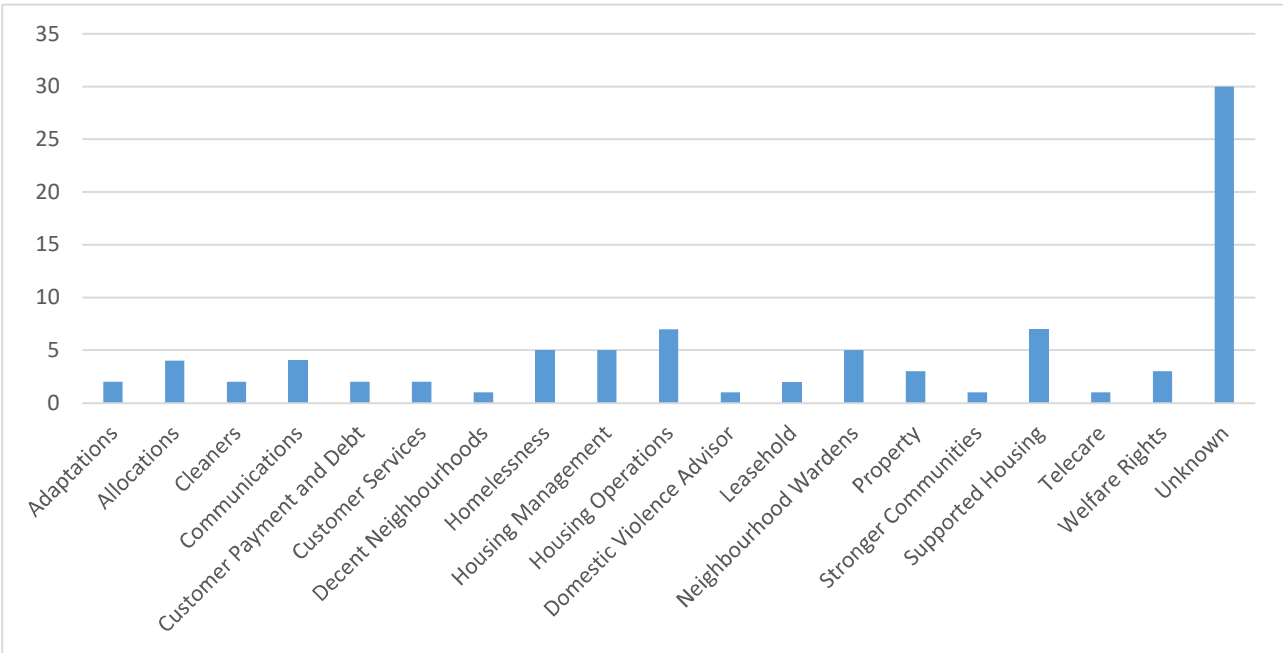
Our recommendations from speaking to managers:

- Teach staff active listening and stigma awareness and involve tenants in the training where possible.
- Consider training staff in Unconditional Positive Regard too.
- When creating/modifying policies etc. add to the impact assessment a section on Stigma to show that this area has been considered before plans are introduced.
- Ensure better communication and transparency regarding the services that the various housing departments offer (or cannot offer) to improve tenants' understanding of the system e.g. through FAQs in Tenants' Link etc.
- Make sure that policies and strategies are on the website with full public access.

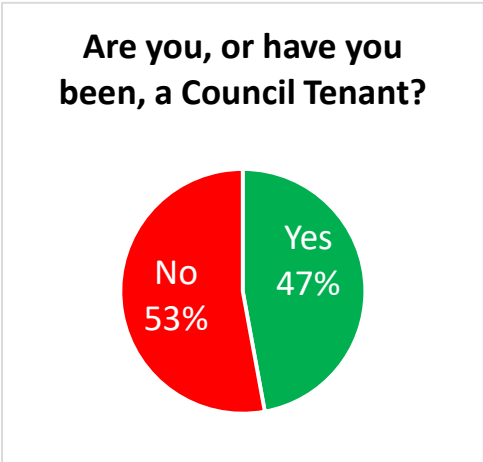
Surveying Staff

As well as speaking to managers from the various departments that make up housing, we also wanted to get a wider feel of the thoughts of staff regarding the issue of social housing stigma. To that end we put together an electronic survey⁶ which was sent out to all members of Housing Services (approx. 600 people) plus to managers of the ancillary services that support housing (e.g. Customer Payment and Debt, Properties and Customer Services etc) asking them to distribute it to their teams. To encourage staff to complete the survey, and to allow them to be candid in their responses, all surveys were anonymous.

In total we received 87 responses from across the different departments and we are very grateful to all those staff who completed it. However, we were disappointed that the engagement rate was still under 15%. The graph below shows the different teams that the respondents worked in, but the vast majority did not specify so have been marked as



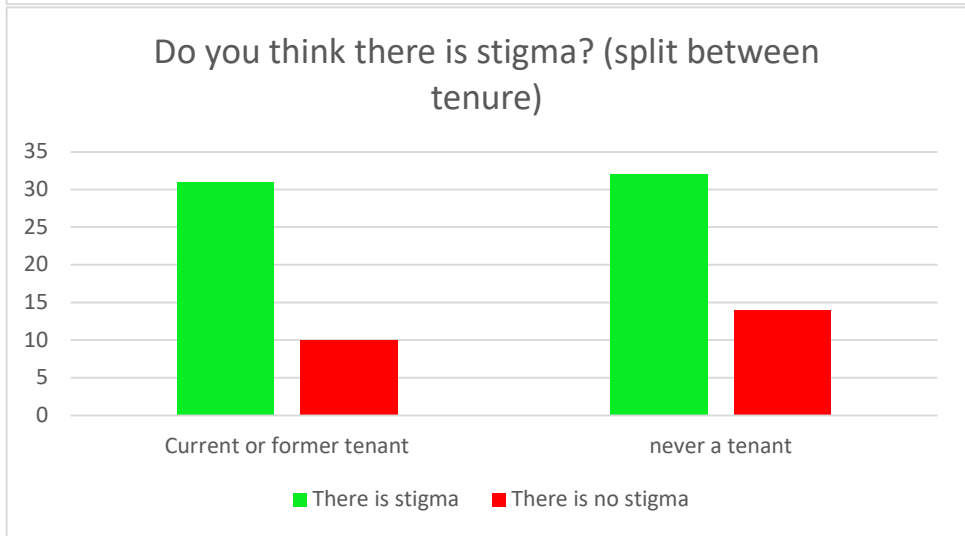
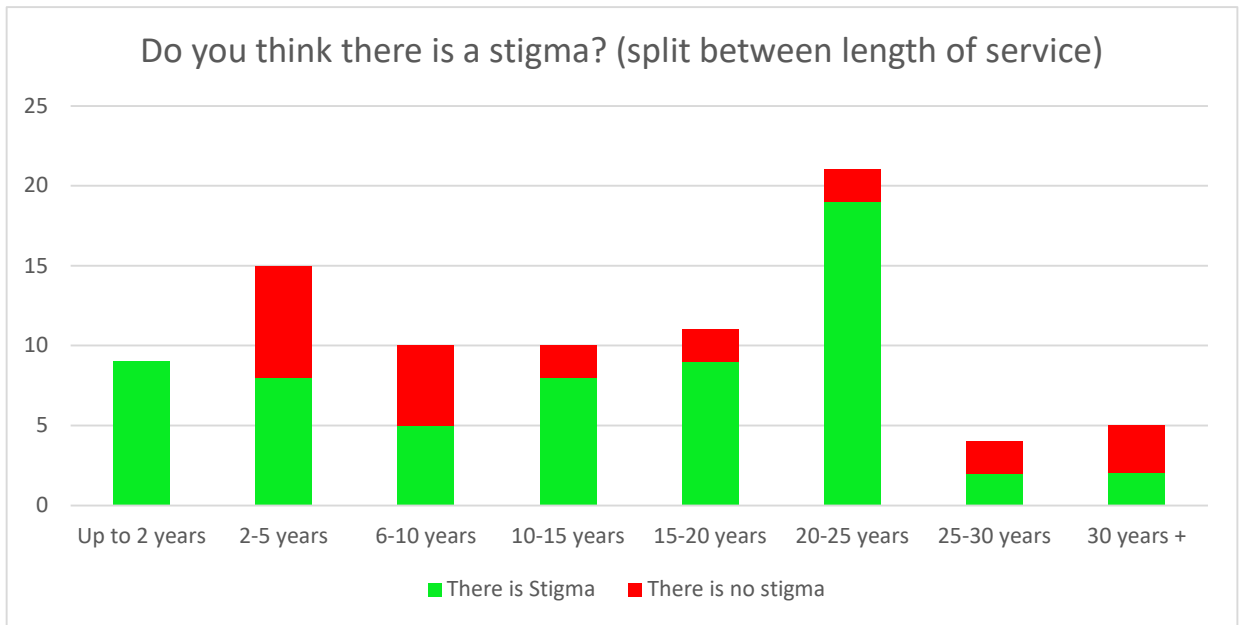
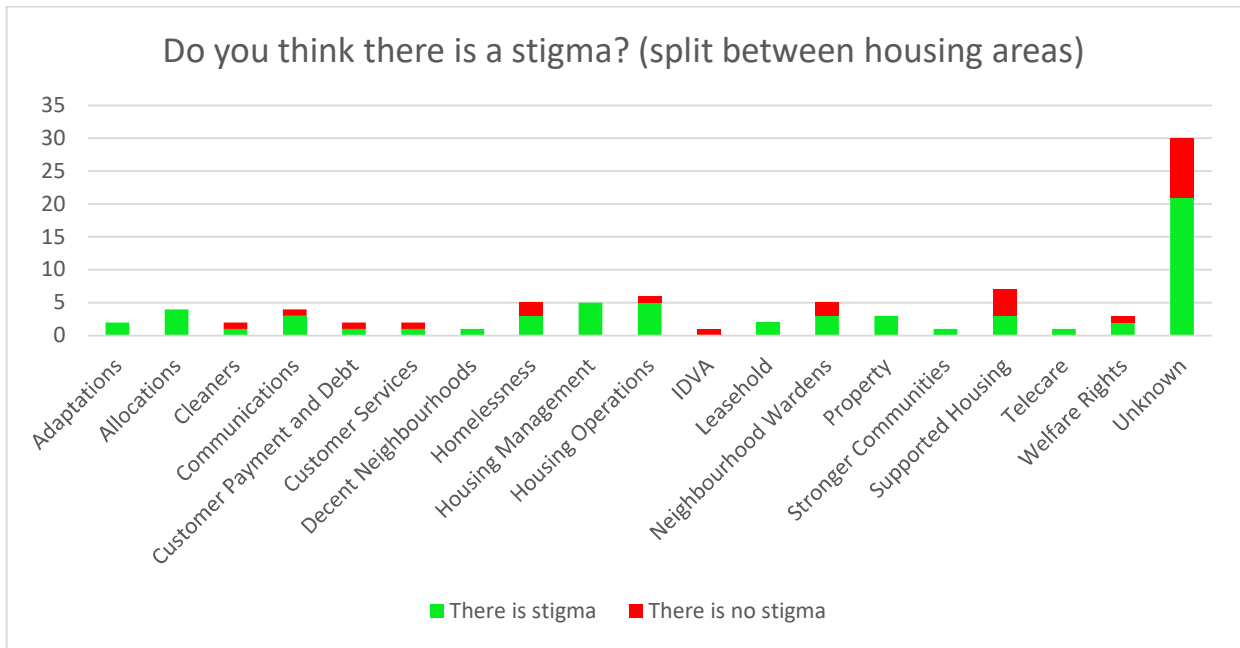
'unknown'. There was also a good mix of new staff and those in longer service. 9% of respondents had been employed by the Council for less than 2 years; 27% between 2 and 10 years; 32% between 10-20 years, 31% over 20 years, and 5% over 30 years.



We also wanted to know the number of staff that are, or have been, council tenants and it was interesting to know that the results were fairly evenly split with just under half 47% (41 surveyed) saying yes as the graph (left) shows.

When asking staff if they felt that there is a stigma with Social Housing 72% (63 responses) said yes, while 28% (24 responses) said no. This was similar to the responses we received from the interviews with managers. It can be seen on the three graphs on the next page how this figure breaks down compared to individual teams (where known), the length of service, and whether they are (or have been) a social tenant themselves.

⁶ A blank paper version of the survey can be found in Appendix 2



It can be seen from the graph (left) that those who are, or have been, a council tenant were slightly more likely to think there was social housing stigma (76%) compared to those who were not (70%).

For those who did not believe there was

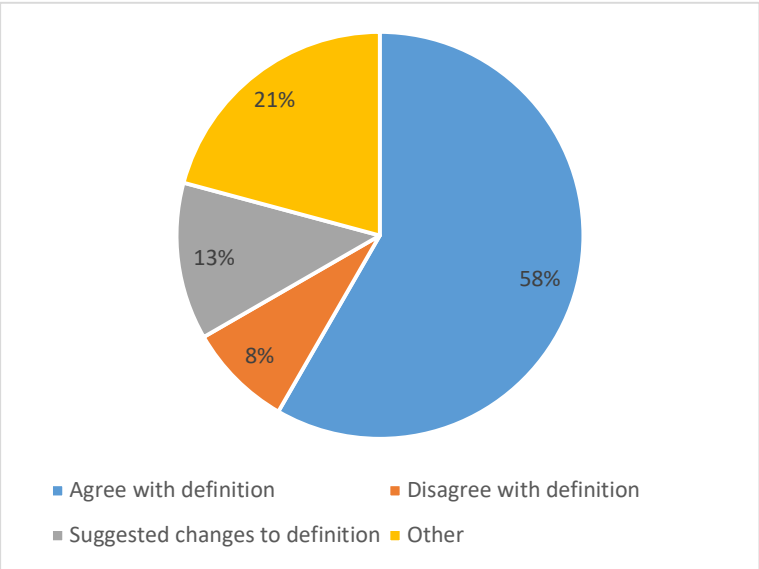
social stigma, there was no need for them to complete the rest of the survey as the questions were not relevant. **Therefore, the remaining questions were only answered by the 72% of respondents who did believe there was stigma.**

For those respondents who did think there was stigma we asked them if they agreed with, or suggested amendments to, our definition of Council Housing Stigma which was:

"Treating council tenants as inferior, assuming tenants as poor, uneducated, lazy and reliant on benefits. It is about defining tenants due to their tenure rather than as individuals."

As the graph on the right shows, over half (58%) agreed with our definition while

I think that definition is almost spot on, some people think you are second class and not as successful because of where you live. I was bought up in a home owned by my parents and now I live in a council property and even though I work I still feel people judge me because of where I live.
Comment from a member of staff

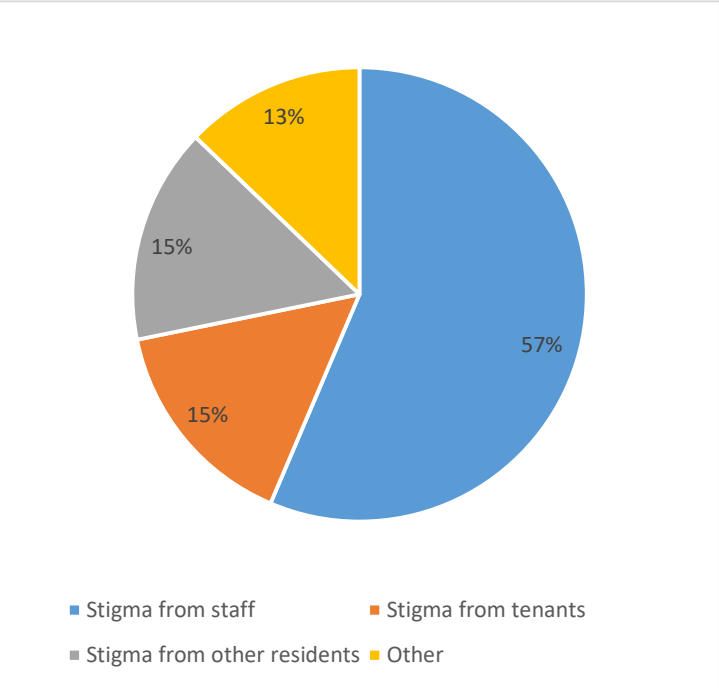


only a few (8%) disagreed. Some made comments thinking that our adjectives used felt too extreme and thought that the stigma was more about people’s ‘socioeconomic status’ rather than their tenure.

There were also a number of comments about the perceived lack of pride in areas and the lack of respect some tenants have for their homes.

The full list of comments (which we would encourage you to read) are found in Appendix 3.

We also asked those staff if they had encountered the effects of stigma, either in their tenant interactions or from other staff members. Just over two thirds (68%) said they had witnessed such a thing. When we broke down their comments into themes, as the graph below shows, the majority of them were regarding stigma coming from staff (though most make the point that is a minority of staff). A few comments included:



- Some staff definitely think people who don't own their property are failures. That they are lazy. That they are stupid. That if they achieved buying a house why can't they. Many staff are not like this but there is a significant minority who are.*
- I have witnessed an attitude that tenants should be grateful for anything we do, even when it is our legal obligation as a landlord.*
- At a workshop on adaptations when discussing choice for tenants over products an SCC surveyor made the comment that the properties are ours and we can do what we like with them.*

- *A police man asked if I was in the right building as I had a copy of the I newspaper. A taxi driver telling me how that tower block is full of single mums / druggies / polish / benefits. Plumbers not fussed about finding a leak as this tower block always leaks. Housing officer staff making comments about "all you lot" and the all-time classic from "well what do you expect it's social housing"*

Some comments from staff indicated stigma coming from tenants. There was a real sense of frustration about the lack of action taken when addressing the issue of tenants who take liberties (in the staff's view).

A few comments included:

- *Too wide to encompass. I think there is an underlying feeling that 'tradition' has entrenched the belief on the part of a lot of tenants that they are 'entitled' to everything the Council provides from 1 generation to the next and that they can talk to staff in the rudest possible way.*
- *Staff become frustrated when tenants state they cannot pay rent due to Christmas, birthdays, deaths and school uniforms. Tenants do not like it when confronted and use rent as an interest free loan. They know that nothing much will happen and they are correct.*

There were also a few comments which indicated stigma coming from other residents in their area. Some examples included:

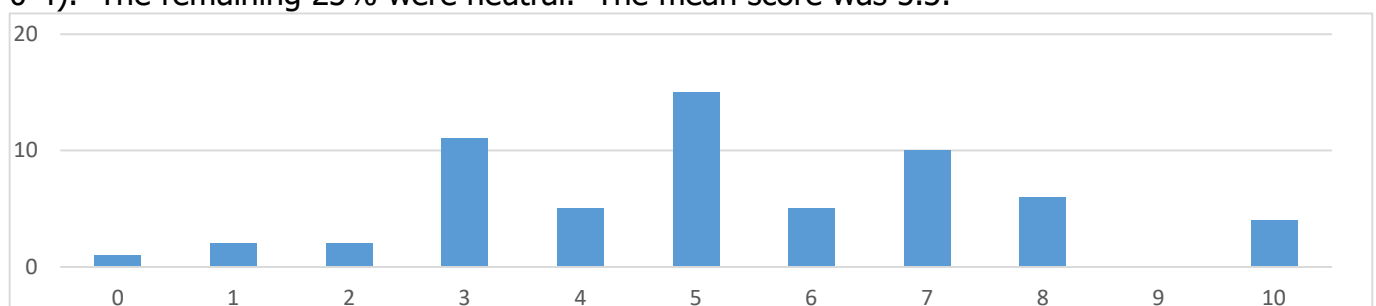
- *Words like.....you're just a council tenant, I'm a home owner. The stigma is one of ego and snobbery from those that own their homes. Home owners believe council tenants have a free ride.*
- *Working with people who have purchased their properties either through the RTB scheme or on the open market we often have to deal with comments and complaints which are directed at Council tenants. The main reasons being that some leaseholders believe that Council tenants rely on benefits and don't pay their way/ are the main cause of ASB/ don't care about the area they live in.*

Again, we would encourage you to read all the comments made which can be found in Appendix 3.

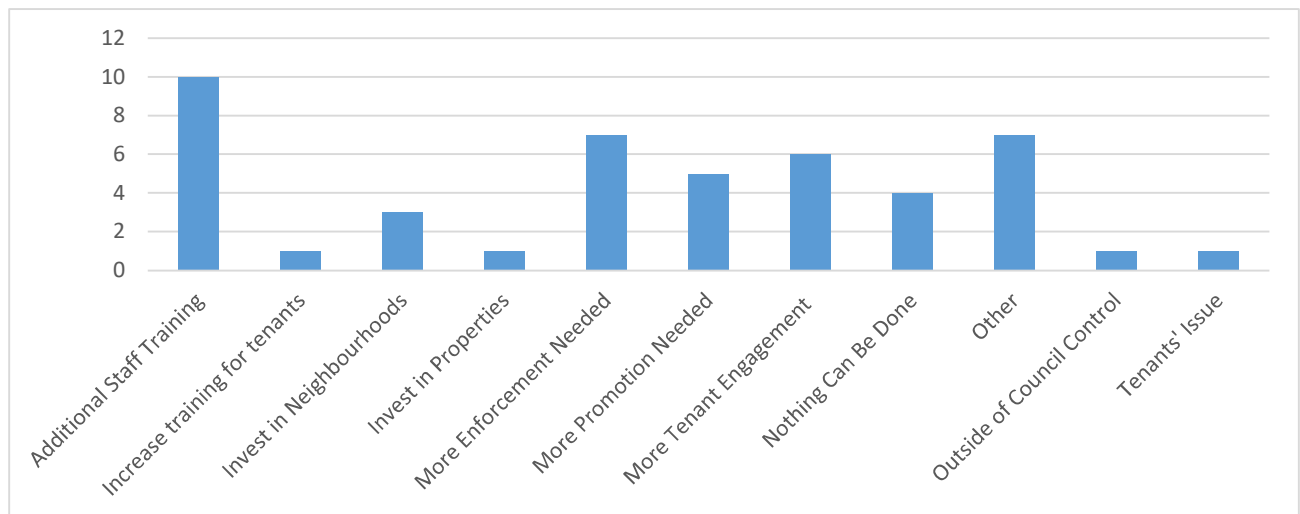
45 respondents (73%) said it would be beneficial to receive specific training on tackling stigma.

When we asked those staff members if they felt comfortable/confident in taking any issues around stigma to senior staff, 24% said no which we felt was quite concerning.

We also asked staff to rate (out of 10) how confident they felt that the council deals with issues of stigma. As the results on the graph below shows, the responses were very mixed. Grouping them, 41% were confident (scoring 6-10) and 34% were not confident (scoring 0-4). The remaining 25% were neutral. The mean score was 5.3.



We asked staff for their ideas about how the council could do better at challenging the issues of stigma. We tried to group the comments as best we could, and this is shown in the graph below.



The most common answers were additional training for staff (22%), followed by more enforcement towards those tenants who seem to abuse the system (large rent arrears was frequently mentioned) at 15% and more tenant engagement (talking to tenants and getting their ideas before work begins) at 13%. In the 'Other' category is encapsulated the provision of more employment opportunities, more thought given to the language used, increasing education in schools, and improving recruitment amongst other things.

We have picked out a few comments which highlight the range of remarks that were made:

- *Training... helping staff step back & see the wider perspective. Often staff deal with the most difficult, challenging customers which can be closer to the stereotypes. this will reinforce stigma, but, it's important to remember that larger proportion of customers (the ones that staff often don't have cause to talk to), do not fit the stereotypes & are positive role models / good citizens.*
- *I think personally we do so so so much, a lot more than other councils across the UK and I think that we have ended up in a molly coddle situation in Southampton I'm glad we have tried to help people but now people are taking the mickey.*
- *There needs to be greater awareness made of the issues and myths that are associated with Council housing, across all areas of the communications published by the council. #Social Housing Lives Matter.*
- *Focusing on further improving external appearance around communal blocks and towers would help, eg keeping grass areas cut shorter and looking better cared for, planting shrubs etc. This also raises the well-being and morale of residents.*
- *Regular training and regular meetings with tenants to hear their views should be a priority. It's important the wider council meet and discuss with tenants what they would like to see changed and how. We need to make more of an effort with understanding tenant concerns and working together to combat them.*
- *Have robust policies and procedures in place so that the tenants cannot live up to that definition. Tackle anti-social behaviour, deal with the problems not move them around the city. Have the backbone to take enforcement action. COLLECT RENT and use the money to develop the estates. Improve the environment, make tenants proud*

of the area they live in.

Many Southampton council housing is on large estates where most tenants will experience the same difficulties/issues i.e. unemployment, benefit issues, mental health, drug/alcohol misuse. Target the poorer deprived areas by funding appropriate services. Some SCC housing areas look dilapidated, unkempt, visible build up of refuse, fly tipping and bulk waste - doesn't help with dismissing council housing stigma.

- *No matter what they do it is not the Council employees that think tenants are awful it is the tenants themselves when they can't get their own way.*
- *The problem I have is that the good tenants who really care about their surroundings and maintain their properties do not often move. I deal with a lot of properties within the poorer areas of the city and this reflects the behaviour of some of the tenants and their responsibilities of being a council tenant. Educating tenants about maintaining an acceptable living standard and maintaining their own homes would improve the stigma around council tenants. These may be considered to be generalised and unscientific comments but I can only relay what I experience on a daily basis.*

We also gave staff the opportunity to make any further points regarding social housing Stigma. A selection of their comments is below.

- *The stigma is a national issue it can't be resolved locally*
- *I think this is a really worthwhile piece of research - well done!*
- *It is the behaviours of the tenants observed by society that create the stigma.*
- *This comes from the top down I once sat in a meeting and a senior manager said "I know most of our tenants can't read".*
- *There is no stigma. The Council is doing the best it can to make sure everyone has a nice place to live and it is up to the tenants to keep it that way. If this was the stigma why do many people buy properties from the Council as it is social housing for those in need. It is attitude of tenants that believed they are owed and have to do nothing in return. I have never heard this stigma from anyone that I know. I am a tenant and employee the stigma is made by the people who live in properties and is the way they feel. They are not made to feel that way at all.*
- *If there was more social housing built we would be able to house a greater range of people ie housing for the many rather marginalised few then this may help?*
- *I think that the Right to Buy scheme has contributed to the problem of stigma in Council housing because those who are able to, can purchase their homes which leaves behind those without the means to do so. This exacerbates the idea that those in Council housing are on low incomes or benefits and have no option but to remain in Council housing. Also, RTB has meant that much of the most desirable housing stock has been sold off which again I think exacerbates the issue of Council housing stigma.*
- *It hurts. It hurts my family as my children have lost friends due to the parents refusing to let them socialise with tower block kids / council estate kids. Friends and family not coming over due to the fear that only bad people/ poor people live in tower blocks.*

As mentioned, the full results of the survey, including all the comments made by staff, can be found in Appendix 3.

Our thoughts and recommendations:

We are very grateful for the time and effort staff members put into responding to our survey and the full range of opinions that came across from members of the different teams. We were disappointed that not more staff completed the survey.

We felt a large amount of frustration from some staff regarding the lack of enforcement for those tenants who build up large arrears, or break their tenancy agreements, which increases the stigma. This may relate to comments made regarding staff members having to spend 80%+ of their time dealing with the tenants who cause the most issues. It is clear from reading the responses that there are tenants who exacerbate the stereotype which increases the stigma for everyone.

Whilst 28% of respondents did not feel there was a stigma relating to council housing, enough examples were given from those who did to show that it does happen across the different layers of the council, and that the council should not be complacent.

We acknowledge that we may have missed an opportunity with the online survey, as we did not give all respondents the chance to comment as to why they felt that Social Housing Stigma does not exist.

There were some comments made stating that there was no stigma. We felt that most of these were prime examples of Stigma and how it can 'sneak under the radar'.

The fact that 24% of staff surveyed said that they did not feel comfortable/confident in taking any issues around stigma to senior staff is also something that, we feel, needs addressing.

Our recommendations from surveying the staff:

- As already mentioned, develop staff training in stigma.
- Increase investment in neighbourhoods, talking to residents first to help give them a sense of ownership in the improvements.
- More effective enforcement of the Tenancy Agreement.
- Ensure all vacancies within Housing are advertised to council tenants.
- Managers to encourage staff to participate more in external surveys as they can highlight positive staff actions as well as allowing staff freedom of anonymised feedback.
- Managers undertake additional training to better provide a supportive and secure environment for staff to feel able to raise their issues.

Surveying Tenants

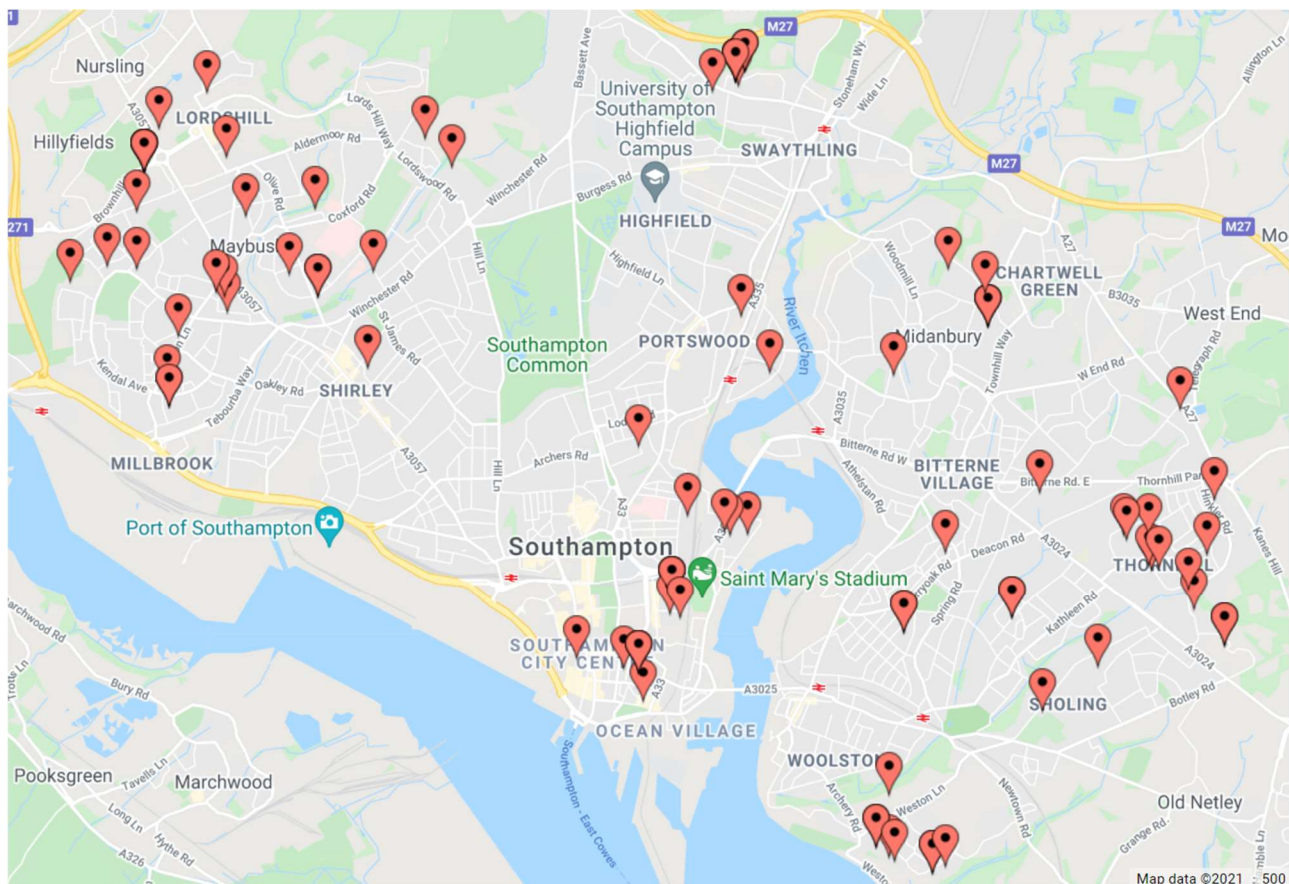
As well as obtaining views of staff, we also wanted to gain feedback from tenants about their view of Council House Stigma.

We decided to send a survey out on the Tenant Engagement Team's Tenant Sounding Board (both in paper form plus an electronic link for those wanting to complete the form online). Also, we put a post on the main SCC Housing's Facebook page, the Tenant Engagement Facebook Group and in Tenants' Link to obtain a response from a wider group of people.

We wanted to discover their views of the positives and negatives of being a council tenant, their neighbourhoods⁷ and whether they've experienced council housing stigma. We also wanted to gauge their interactions with the different areas of the housing service. We put together a survey which can be found in Appendix 4.

The surveys were sent out on 5th August 2021 and respondents were initially given to the end of August to return them, but this was extended to allow a link to be included in the September edition of Tenants' Link⁸. A prize draw of two £20 supermarket vouchers was offered to encourage responses⁹.

In total 92 surveys were returned which we were really grateful for, and the responses came from all over the city as the map¹⁰ below shows (2 responses did not give their postcode).



⁷ These questions were based from the London School of Economics report: Overcoming the Stigma of Social Housing: (February 2018) <https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/casereport115.pdf>

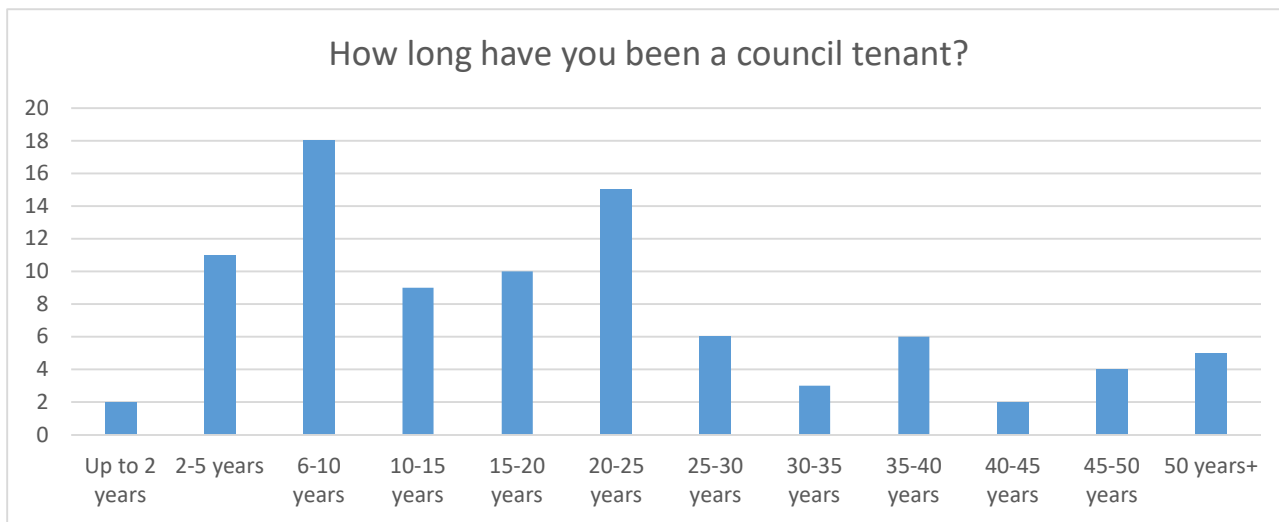
⁸ <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/your-tenancy/tenants-link/article/we-need-you/>

⁹ The vouchers were won by a tenant from Malin Close in Lordshill and a tenant from Gerard Crescent in Thornhill.

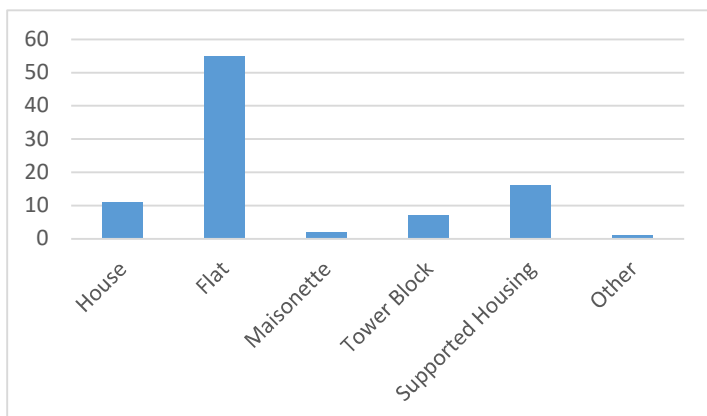
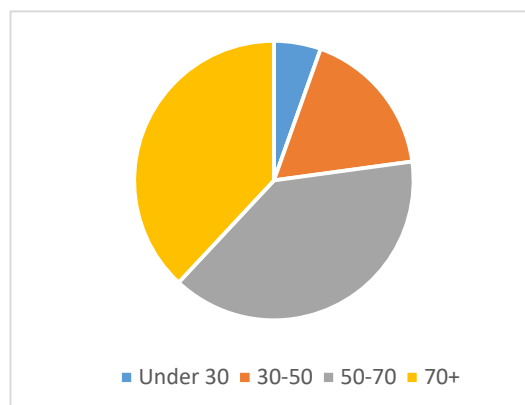
¹⁰ The map can be viewed online at <https://www.easymapmaker.com/map/tenantstigmasurvey>

The majority of the responses came from the SO14 area (17.4%), SO16 area (38%) and SO19 areas (30.4%).

We had a good mix in terms of how long the respondents had been council tenants, ranging from less than a year to 61 years and counting! Between 6-10 years and 20-25 years were the most common as the graph below shows.



The responses were weighted to a predominantly older age group with 77% of respondents indicating they were aged 50+ (see graph, right). This may be because the nature of tenant engagement nationally steers towards the older age group who are more likely to complete surveys. The surveys were completed by tenants of a variety of different property types with the majority coming from flats (60%). The breakdown of the different premises can be seen below.

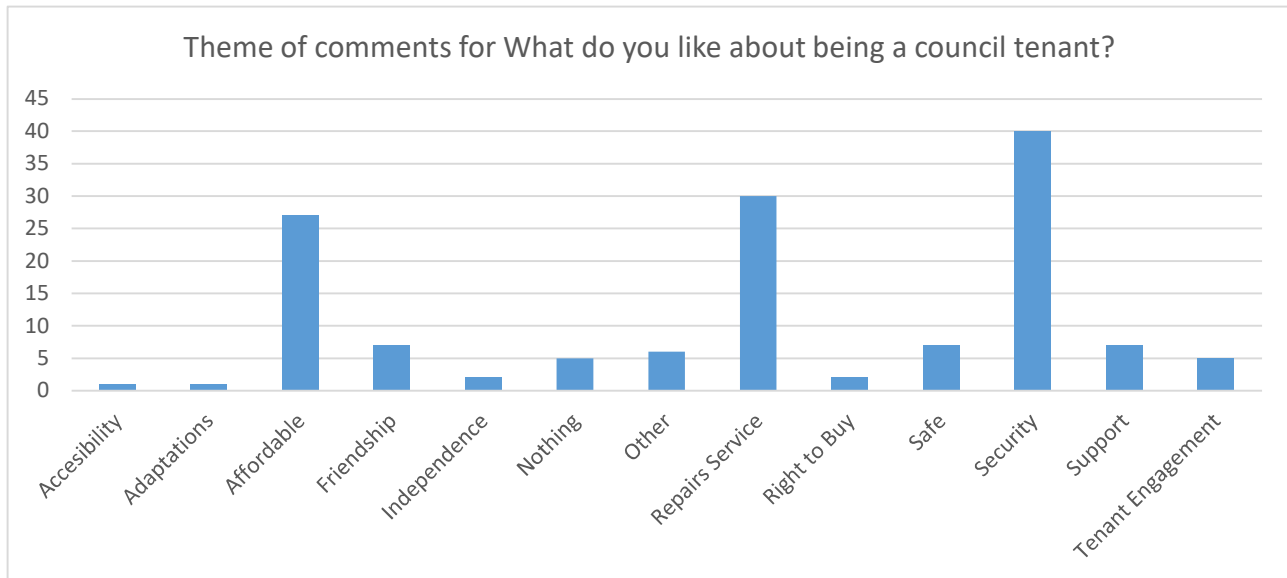


When tenants were asked what the positives of being a council occupant were, three common themes stood head and shoulders above the rest: Affordable, Repairs Service, and Security of Tenure, as the graph on the following page shows.

The Word Cloud (below) from their comments gives a good impression of the common themes too!

Word Cloud for question: What do you like about being a council tenant?





Some positive comments included:

- *The way all my housing needs (repairs, plumbers, electricians, neighbourhood problems etc) can be dealt with without too many hassles or expense. To know that social housing tends to be better cared for regarding upkeep than private landlords who charge quadruple the price. Which we currently could not afford. Affordability as well then!*
- *Providing you behave yourself, you will always have a roof over your head and help is generally there for you if needed.*
- *After many years renting privately, I greatly appreciate the security of being a council tenant - and the affordable rents.*

Not everyone was so positive and there were examples of tenants who appeared to suffer racism in their day to day lives from fellow residents:

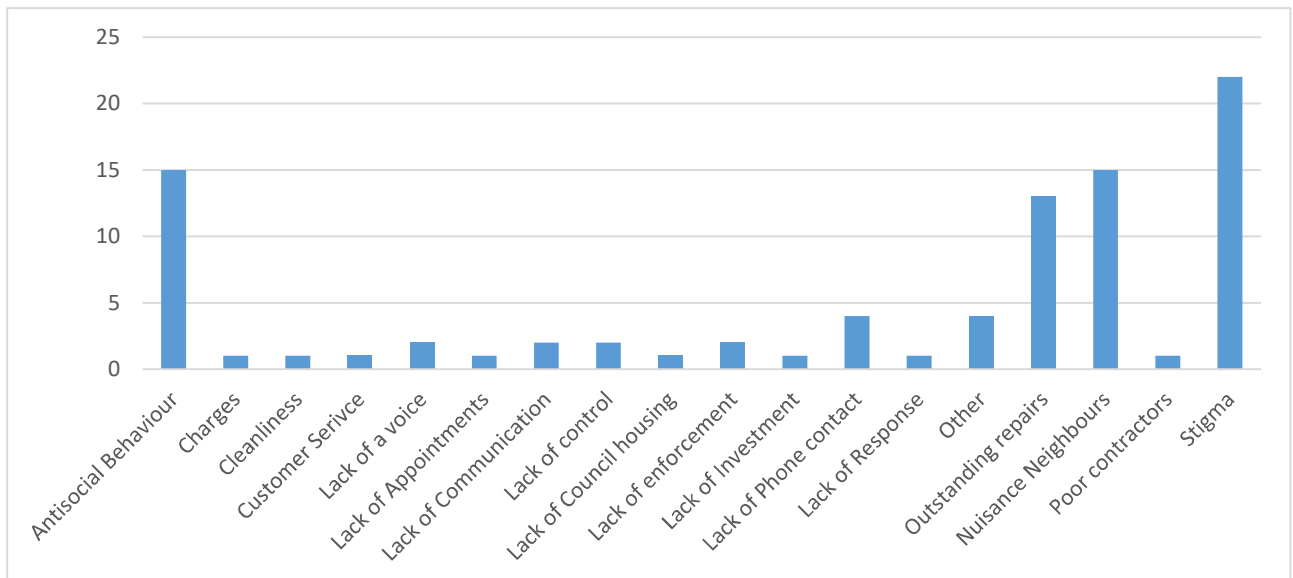
- *Nothing, anymore. We, all those who are not British (White or otherwise!), are victims of permanent racism. We are treated as foreigners (I have been in this Estate for 26 years), and I hear British tenants on this block saying: "We can't get rid of them". Report the issue? I cannot be at war with everybody, all of the time.*

There were four common themes that emerged from the responses to the question "What are the not so good things about being a council tenant?" which can be seen in the graph on the following page:

- Stigma
- Nuisance Neighbours
- Antisocial Behaviour
- Outstanding repairs

We picked out some key comments which included:

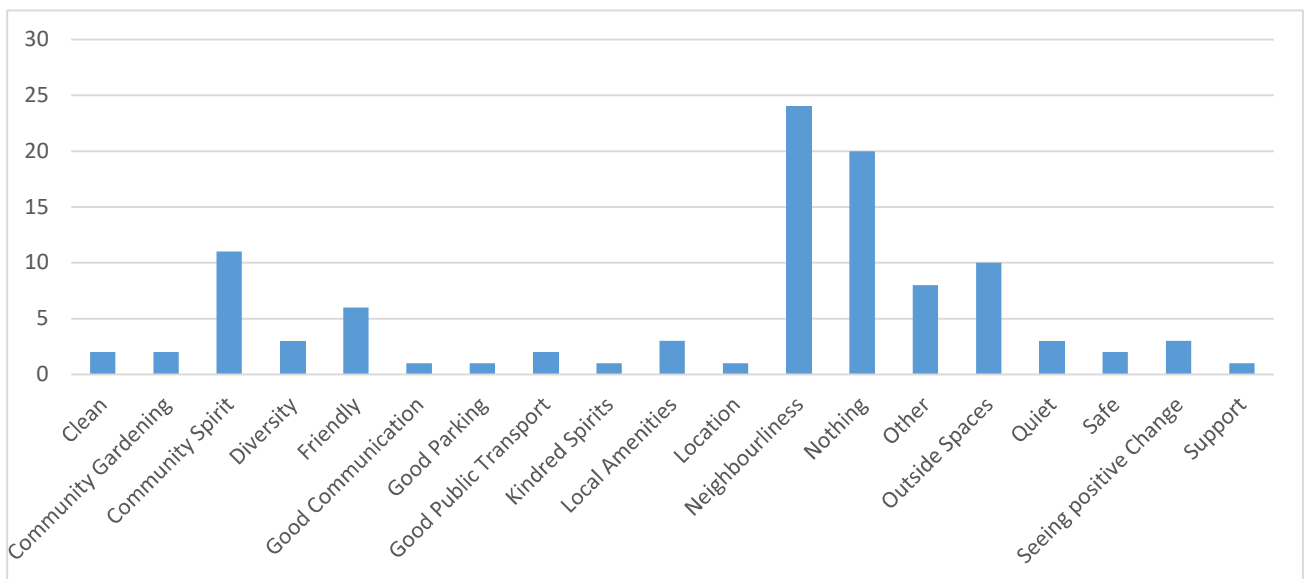
- *Getting stigma from people especially my own family. being looked down upon as though I'm not supporting myself*
- *It is not always easy to get in touch with the council (telephone's a big problem - I am not net and web capable)*



- *All improvements are carried out by unprofessional workmen, who always think that whatever poor quality work they deliver is good enough for Council tenants. There are never Council Repairs Inspectors to check their work and see the damage before or after it has been completed, and if the Warden ever reports anything, it falls in deaf ears. On completion, it just looks shabby, and a lot is permanently damaged in the name of "necessary" improvements. Improvements that are deemed to be completed in 6 months, they take 1 year. [Extracted from a longer comment]*
- *Not being listened to, not being informed and broken promises*
- *Area stigma – Thornhill, to some, raises a few eyebrows, but where I live it's so quiet and trouble free.*

There were some comments which, to us, showed tenants revealing their own stigma attitude towards others, particularly around non-white UK residents and those with disabilities etc.

When we asked people what made them feel proud about their communities/neighbourhoods, differing answers were given, and the themes are portrayed in the graph below:

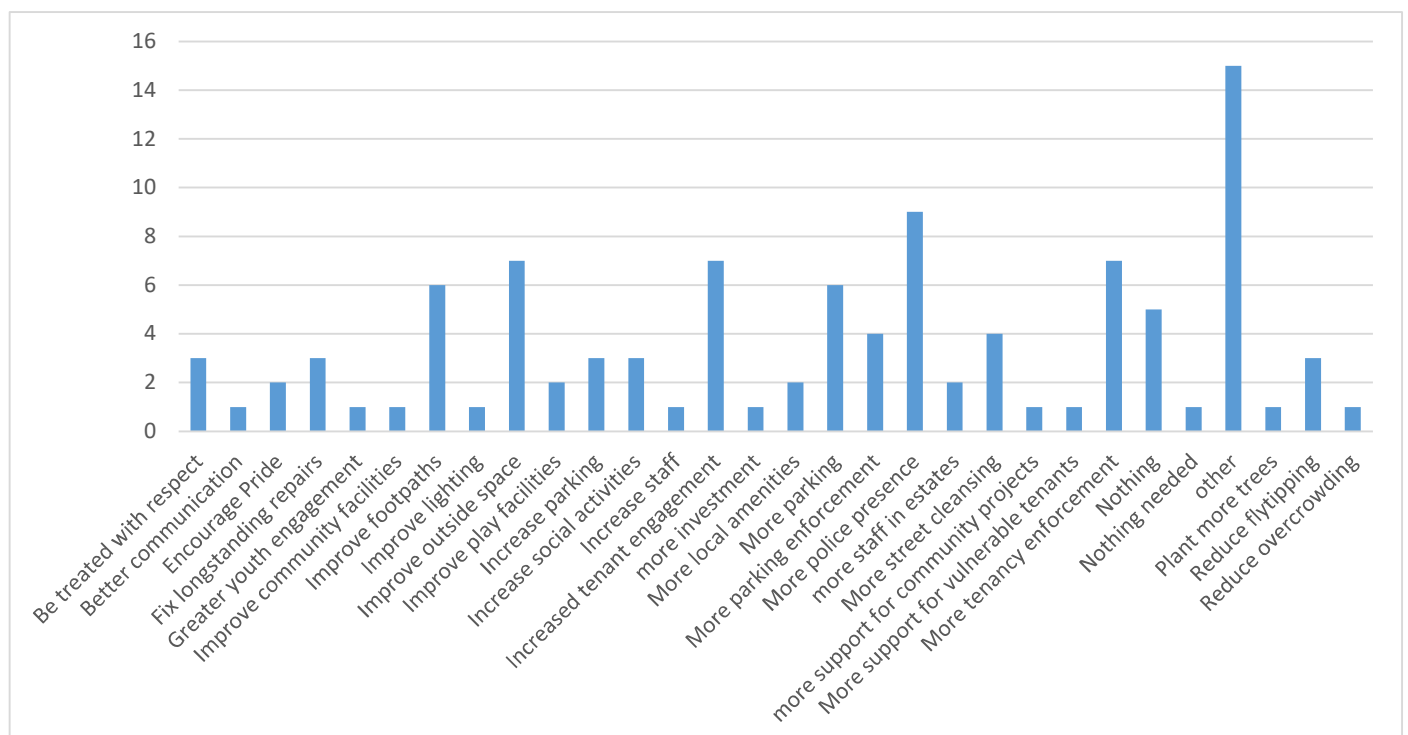


The top and third most popular answer was neighbourliness and community spirit, but it was worrying/concerning to see that 24% of respondents stated that they do not feel proud anymore. It was positive that recent ventures, such as the community gardening initiatives, are making an impact.

Some key comments from residents included:

- *Not a lot lately. I feel like I'm the only one around this area who cares. If I didn't report repairs, inside the block and out, help keep litter to a minimum and generally look out for the area (safety/crime) and be considerate to others it would be a pretty miserable place.*
- *We have lovely neighbours and we have helped each other through the pandemic and NO covid victims in our block :-)*
- *Kindness and neighbourliness, perseverance and dignity in face of low income/ opportunities/ crap low paid jobs. Stoicism of single parents, older people, people with disabilities. Diversity of area which is often disrespected and under-resourced.*
- *I study as a mature student, (PhD research on working class women), so contact is limited to saying hi mostly, but it is nice that neighbours are long term and not a regular turnover, we are a community, I know all my neighbours first names. I have privately rented and was not welcomed by my neighbours who owned their homes. That was a bigger stigma, they already had preconceptions as I was a single parent with two children, (now grown). They felt somehow superior, not sure why money makes people behave that way. The need to feel higher than another is quite sad.*
- *I don't feel proud right now as sheds get broken into, back gate lock always broke, down and out use sheds area as toilets and drug dealer do their deal here, but I am proud of Council.*

We also asked tenants what could be done to improve their communities and neighbourhoods. Again, trying to theme all comments was difficult. The graph below shows just some of the issues that were mentioned.



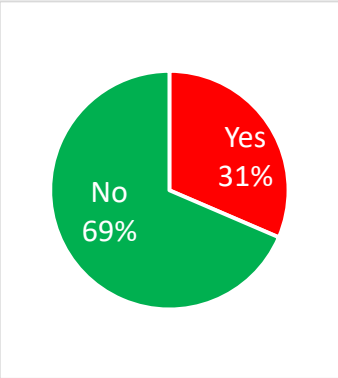
The common themes from tenants included:

- Improved care of the estate (i.e., footpaths, parking, street cleansing, fly tipping, outside space improvement, play areas etc)
- More enforcement (tenancy, parking, increased police presence)
- More engagement (youth, social activities, supporting community projects).

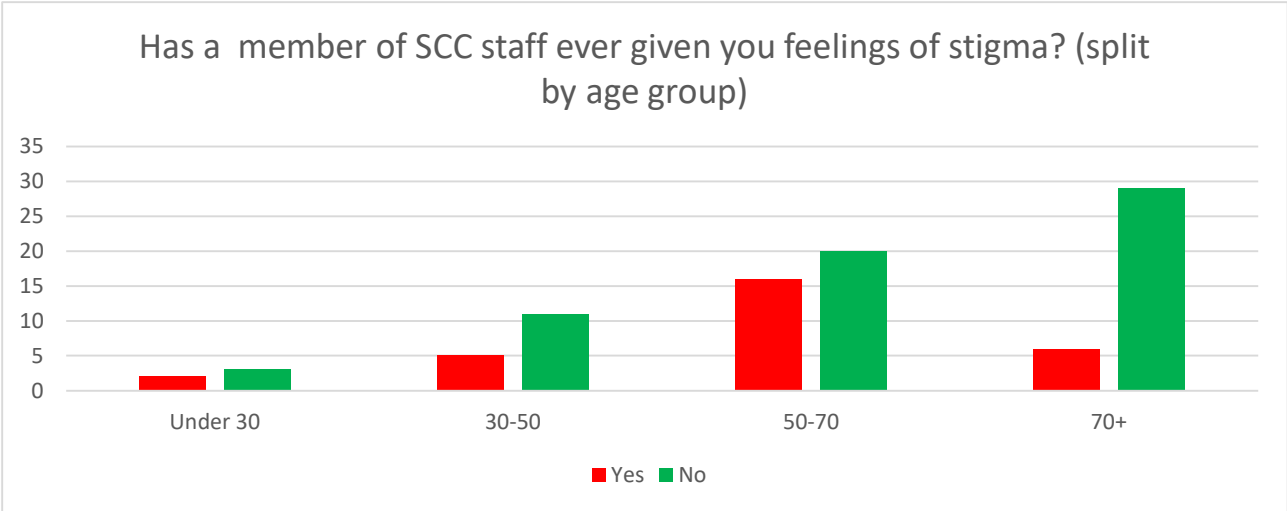
Here are a few comments from respondents that we have picked out:

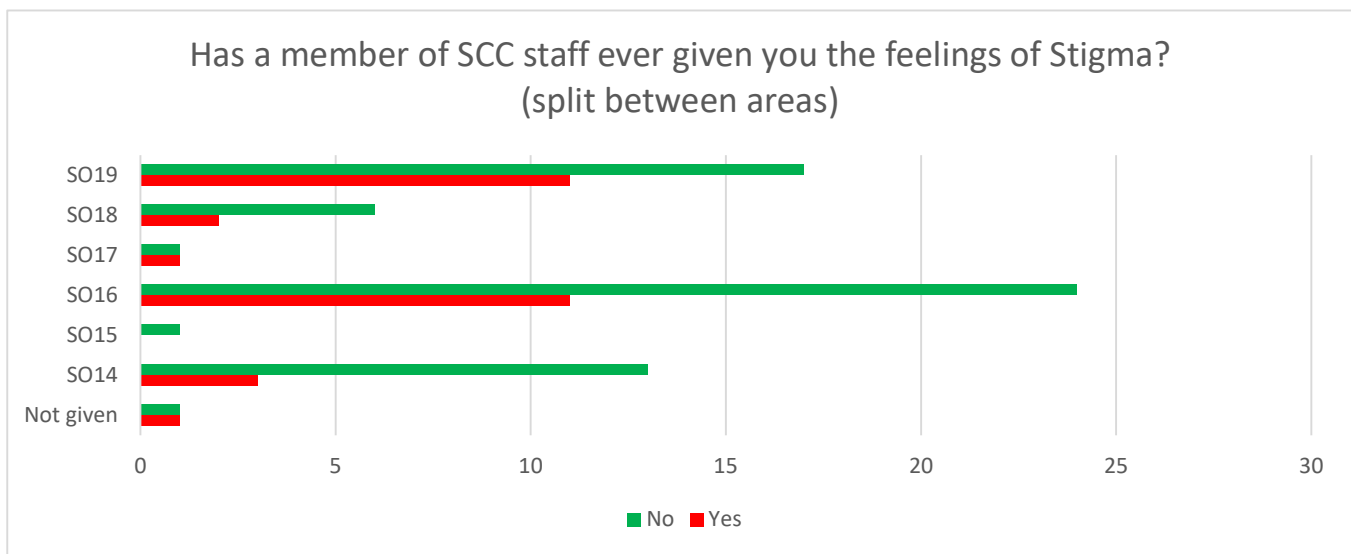
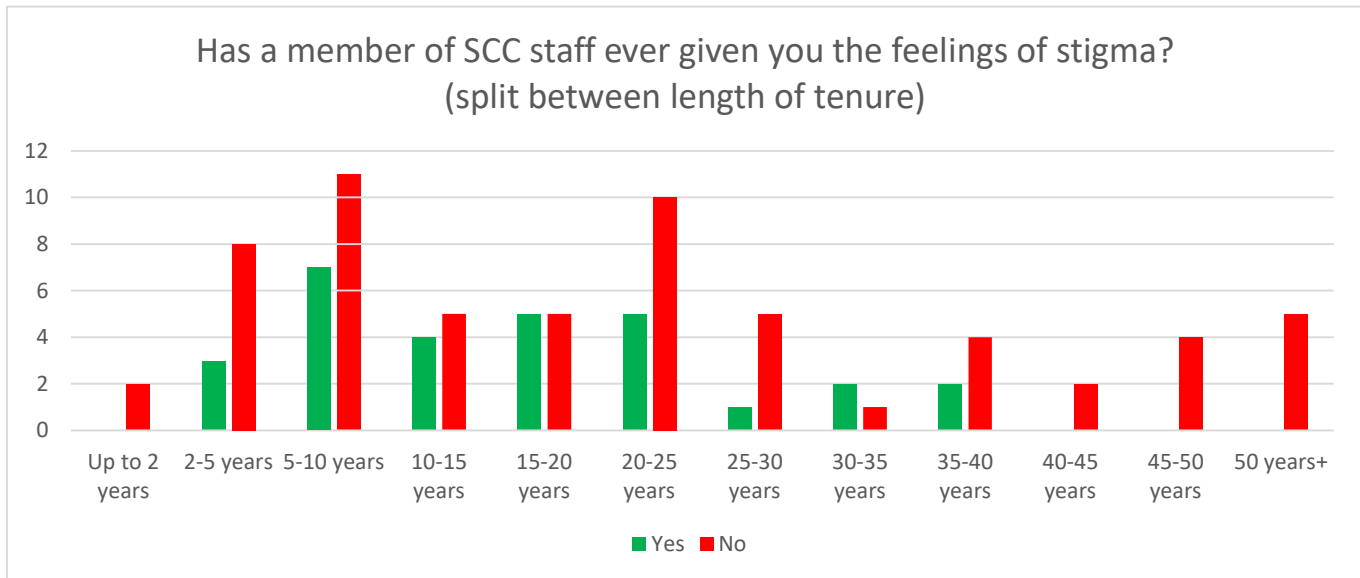
- *First of all, when we contact the Council, to report an issue, it would be polite if we were not to be treated with disdain, dismissed, patronized. It would be nice to be answered and listened to properly; it would be nice to feel that our reports are acted upon, and to have feedback! I even have to call to get feedback, mostly to be told I cannot have one, (because the perpetrator's rights prevail over the victim's).*
- *Treat us like adults and not problems. Enabling grassroots actions. Stop closing down amenities. Stop racial profiling of our kids. Decent jobs and opportunities for young people.*
- *more consultation on anything that directly affects residents in the area & more decision making from the tenants & leaseholders about their surrounding area when plans are made.*
- *Stop people from using the foot paths as a cut through, and as a private driveway and as a parking space, making it difficult use the paths. Stop the parking on green spaces, making it into a mud pond.*
- *Firework ban. There are so many drugs I am deeply embarrassed to live here.*

We asked in the survey if anyone working for the council ever caused tenants feelings of stigma or made them feel uncomfortable about being a council housing tenant. As the graph to the right shows just under 1/3 of responses (29) said they had felt stigmatised, compared to the 63 responses that said they had not.



We have also broken this figure down via areas, ages, and length of tenure to see if these affect about how people feel. Our results clearly show that particularly older tenants (aged 70+) and those who have been council tenants for 40 years plus, have less feelings of stigma compared to other ages. This may be due to when council housing was a more common tenure and stigma less prevalent.





We asked people to give examples of the stigma they have received. There were lots of cases of tenants feeling frustrated, of being ignored, receiving very poor customer service, and having the impression that sometimes the council forgets that they are dealing with people's homes. Just some of the comments given were:

- *When pointing out that they should have made appointment to come to my home instead of just turning up "on speck" expecting to gain access.....their response was that it was the Council's property and as such they can demand entry whenever they like*
- *It was during a Housing Estate Residents and Tenants Association. I put my hand up, to ask a question, and the Chair, looked at the Housing Officer next to her, and she said in a tone loud enough for me to hear across the room: "What the hell does she want now?" And the Housing Officer laughed!
I felt that more, a lot more, is to be expected from Civil Servants, at least in public, and when they are representing the Local Government (even if they share some more questionable peoples' attitudes).*
- *generally good but sometimes staff & contractors forget they are effectively in your back garden, outside your home*
- *A warden wasn't polite when I reported a problem and banged my door incredibly hard and barked at me instead of just talking. Saying he takes no nonsense.*

Whatever that meant. I'd reported an outside leak. I felt annoyed because I'm trying to help. He made me feel like I was a nuisance and just adding to his workload

- *Apparently council tenants aren't supposed to file complaints about poor or non-existent service or hold employees to account for their failings. We're just supposed to put up with whatever happens or however we are treated such as being lied to by council staff about sprinkler installations and not make a fuss and we get penalised if we do. Especially women tenants. Male tenants complain about something - it gets addressed quickly. Women complain about same issue and get ignored. We've even tried experiments here where a male tenant will make a complaint and a woman will make the same complaint and results bear out the conclusion that female tenants get treated differently and more poorly than male tenants*
- *A site foreman was always extremely rude but he got better with time*
- *I think it's more about the cheapening of the system. Closing offices, losing staff, dealing with Gateway, being forced online, dreadful state of stairways, lifts and paving. Feeling we don't matter.*
- *The local housing officer, and some of the wardens seem to be ignoring us.*
- *When I first became a tenant, council worker introducing me - shouted and talked as though I was simple. I complained and it was immediately put right.*
- *When my kitchen and bathroom were being refitted I felt I was left with limited autonomy and since the work done, more substandard work has been discovered*
- *A letter that was quite patronising. Made me feel that I was seen as stupid and incapable*
- *I was reporting a problem with our Heating unit. (which is different). They told me I was not calling the correct people and I should call our energy provider which was written on the payment card. In a tone that made me feel 2 inches tall or stupid. When our energy provider for our heating is SCC.*
- *A repair man came over about the windows and these are very old in a bad state but made us feel responsible for the age and disrepair but they all need changing so I thought that was unfair*
- *When originally trying to get housed, I sometimes felt that I was being judged for needing a council house because I couldn't find anything suitable in the private sector. It wasn't so much a single event as a series of events. When I was struggling to maintain my tenancy due to a lack of social care, I was frequently made to feel like my position as a council tenant was used as "ammunition" to make me look after the property better, almost to "motivate" me to be able to do tasks I'd been assessed as needing support for and was clearly struggling with - I was made to feel like I was just being lazy and was essentially threatened with homelessness as motivation.*
- *A housing inspector. He walked in as if it was his personal property and marched straight through to the bedroom which is damp and made it seem like it was all my fault, when actually it is not. He was going on about hanging washing on heaters... I do not, I have a tumble dryer on the balcony. I live with damp now rather than have another like him marching through my flat, which btw I take my shoes off in. He was not courteous at all, I felt very uncomfortable.*

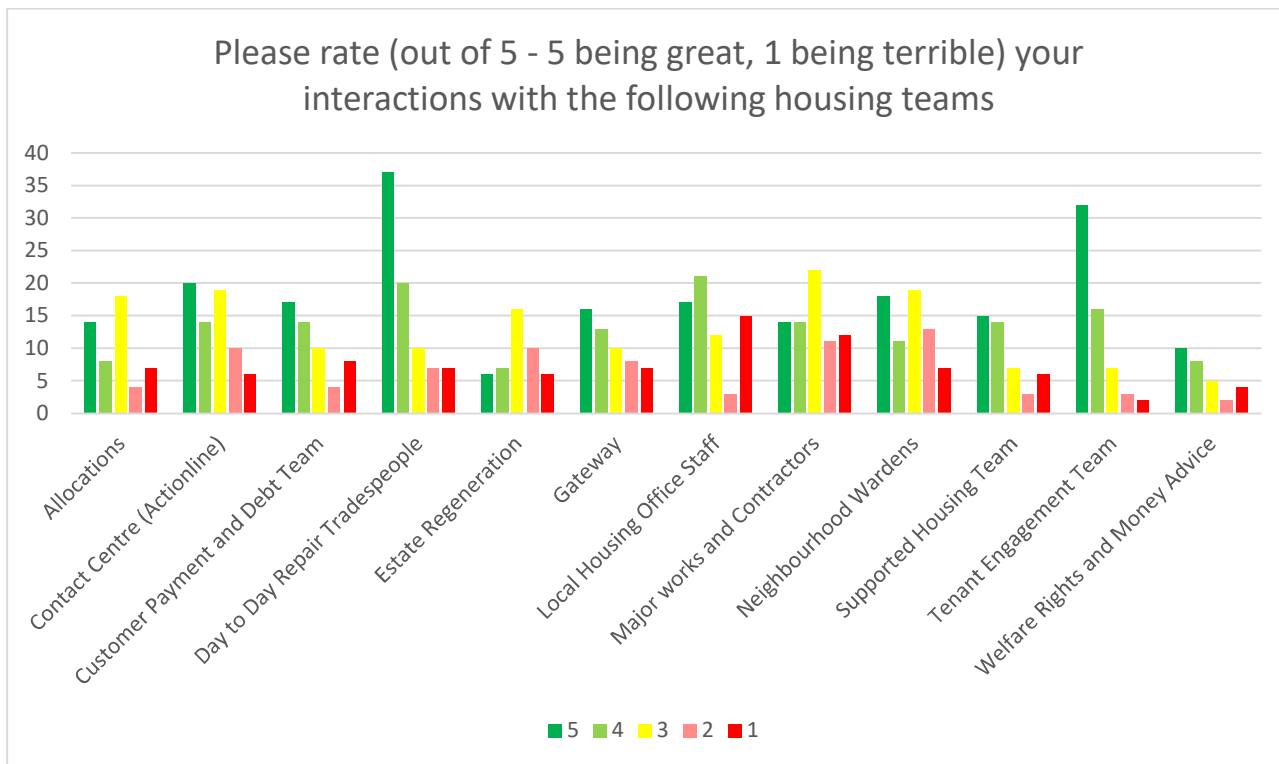
- *When I rang and asked for advice about being in a top floor flat with no lift with two children and one on the way they told me this is why I shouldn't have children so close together*
- *If you are an old woman with a foreign accent you are intimidated, spoken to in a rude manner, treated like non existing by council contractors.*
- *A repair was being carried out and the guy was talking to someone in the office and without realising the phone was passed on. He said 'you should have just patched it up'. He had a shock when I asked him why was that. Also hearing trades talking about future repairs to council homes and employees recommending charging tenants for repairs for profit to the council.*

We asked people to assess their experiences with the different divisions that made up the housing departments. They rated them from 5 (great) to 1 (terrible). If they had no experience of a team they were asked to tick 'Not Applicable' (N/A). The scores given can be seen in the table below. (The positive percentage is based on those who scored a service 4 or 5, a negative percentage is based on a score of 1 or 2).

Area of Service	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	Average score	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Allocations	14	8	18	4	7	36	3.35	43%	35%	22%
Contact Centre (Actionline)	20	14	19	10	6	20	3.46	49%	28%	23%
Customer Payment and Debt Team	17	14	10	4	8	33	3.53	58%	19%	23%
Day to Day Repair Tradespeople	37	20	10	7	7	3	3.90	70%	12%	17%
Estate Regeneration	6	7	16	10	6	37	2.93	29%	36%	36%
Gateway	16	13	10	8	7	32	3.43	54%	19%	28%
Local Housing Office Staff	17	21	12	3	15	18	3.32	56%	18%	26%
Major works and Contractors	14	14	22	11	12	14	3.10	38%	30%	32%
Neighbourhood Wardens	18	11	19	13	7	17	3.29	43%	28%	29%
Supported Housing Team	15	14	7	3	6	39	3.64	64%	16%	20%
Tenant Engagement Team	32	16	7	3	2	27	4.22	80%	12%	8%
Welfare Rights and Money Advice	10	8	5	2	4	55	3.62	62%	17%	21%

The three highest scoring teams were Tenant Engagement with 4.2, Day to Day Repairs with 3.9 and Supported Housing with 3.6. A high score for Tenant Engagement may be expected due to sending the survey to the council's Tenant Sounding Board, meaning that they already have a relationship (hopefully positive!) with that team.

The three lowest scores are Neighbourhood Wardens with 3.29, Major Works and Contractors with 3.1 and Estate Regeneration with 2.93. Estate Regeneration were the only team to have a higher negative score than positive.



The next question we asked was ‘What advice would you give to council staff to avoid causing stigma?’ Lots of different ideas came forward and we would encourage you to read all the comments in the appendices. The Word Cloud below gives a sense of the common words and phrases:



One of the most common comments was the request to be treated with respect and always remembering that, while they may belong to the council, these are our homes. The Customer Service theme kept coming up with a request to answer phone calls and emails. The Listening to Tenants subject also recurred. Taking complaints seriously was mentioned too.

Residents did realise there were ‘good’ tenants and ‘bad’ ones (as there are in all tenures) but being treated as individuals was another common theme.

Some key ideas put forward included:

- *Stop making all Estates look like they're made from a concrete template.*
- *To visit and engage with council tenants to understand their problems, and consult them re their circumstances to get a better understanding.*
- *Remember that these are our homes... even though rented from the council*

Most of you may be one pay-check away from needing a Council property. Remember that you, too, would like to live in a safe, peaceful environment, and be treated with respect.

Comment from a tenant

- *It is not the Council-employed staff who generally cause the stigma. I have had issues in the past with two "bad apples" in Housing but generally they are very good and conscientious. Contractors are another matter altogether. When I reported unsafe contractor working practices 3 years ago the Contractor's "Health and Safety" manager as good as called me a liar because he clearly expected to get away with it.*
- *Remember these people pay for the right to live here which indirectly pays their wages, understand that policies set in concrete will not work in every case & each person is different, put themselves in the tenant's position would they want to be ignored and told this is going to happen whatever you decide or want, these are people's homes regardless if leaseholder or tenant*
- *Regarding anti-social behaviour, some staff are extremely biased and do not take complaints seriously and have been very rude.*
- *I suggest that they try and answer emails and return phone calls, that there could be a bit less bureaucracy.*
- *Remember that younger council tenants exist and aren't just milking off the system, that our position as tenants shouldn't be used as leverage when they feel that we're not meeting "their" standards.*
- *We are people too. Respect is not a given, treat us as you would like to be treated.*

For the final question we asked if they had any other comments regarding council housing stigma. There were a full range of comments. Some showed the impact of stigma:

- *It should be more advertised that council tenants are people too. I have family members who won't visit me I have to go to restaurants to meet them! Or they will stay at hotels and not my house.*
- *I found being a single mother that you aren't properly represented and definitely be discriminated. I will never get over how I was treated and bullied by those at the local housing office.*
- *It can create lifelong feelings of inferiority and escalates the class social divide.*
- *It exists widely in society at large. I am a Civil Engineering professional and several of my colleagues refer to "people who live on Council estates" in a derogatory manner. I always put them right, but it is very frustrating to be considered the dregs of society because your only chance of decent housing was Council housing. I think it's similar for people claiming benefits, a significant proportion of whom are in badly paid work.*
- *There is a lot of misconceptions with respect to people living in social housing & it is very difficult getting across the message that we should not all be tarred with the same brush.....there is good and bad wherever you go.....unfortunately the wrong impressions will still continue, despite any initiatives made to the contrary.*

We can change attitudes. Start with Council Staff, Contractors and all workmen. Supervise and check their work. Ensure they carry out their work with Respect and treat us with dignity. Stop making us feel that there is this huge wall between the Council and us, tenants. Stop criminalizing us all.

Comment from a tenant

There were a number of comments from tenants about the wider issues of stigma:

- *It exists and overlays with diversity and therefore can be misunderstood*
- *It's more about other factors - school, clubs, finance etc. The disincentive to access allocated housing causes negative view with public.*
- *Society can only change stigma - that we are all open to change in our lives through no fault of our own, and we need a roof over our heads!*
- *By definition it's not the Council that can do anything. The stigma is in the Private bracket.*
- *I don't think the stigma will ever go no matter what is done. There's ppl who are lucky enough not to become homeless and I don't think they know enough about it to have fair opinions. It's a class thing that will never stop. Sadly there are still people who bend the system to meet their needs to gain that extra bedroom/bigger home/garden etc (I have zero bedrooms, but I'm thankful for what I do have) It's happened for decades and it will continue.*
- *There is a sense that (not from SCC staff) you have somehow have failed because you have a council property and that you are 'taking' from people who 'really' deserve it.*

There were also a number of comments regarding the length of time it takes to carry out work, or general stigma from council staff.

- *The ability to talk to staff quicker.*
- *In general everything is ok but sometimes repairs take a while to get sorted*
- *Not experienced council housing stigma except from council employees and council contractors who frankly should know better.*

Following the survey some tenants also provided photos of unkept areas in their estates which they felt showed stigma, and a copy of a letter that a tenant felt was patronising and stigmatizing.

For the full results of the tenants' survey please see Appendix 5.

Our thoughts and recommendations:

We would like to express our thanks to all the tenants who completed the survey.

It was great to hear all the positive things that tenants felt about their homes and neighbourhoods. It was no surprise that Security of Tenure, Affordability, and the Repairs Services were the most common themes in comments though it was sad that some felt there was nothing positive about being a tenant at all. It is clear that some residents are affected by social housing stigma, racism, and other issues in our communities.

As well as the issue of stigma, antisocial behaviour on estates was also mentioned as an area which not only reinforces stigma but also creates negative feelings for all residents in an area. This was echoed with the request for more tenancy enforcement, and more response from the police to deal with antisocial behaviour from a minority on estates. It was interesting that staff were saying a similar thing on their survey.

The other key theme to improve communities was regarding care for the estates with issues raised such as improving footpaths, planting more trees, dealing with fly tipping and increased street cleansing, to list just a few.

We thought that the fact that 32% of survey respondents said they felt stigmatised was worryingly high. There was a definite correlation between feelings of stigma and poor customer service where tenants felt not listened to, unable to contact the council, and feeling disrespected in their own homes.

The issue of contractors was mentioned a few times. When asking respondents to rate their experiences of various teams, contractors were the second lowest scoring team just below Estate Regeneration which often involves decommissioning properties which is naturally very stressful for all residents involved. There does seem to be some disconnection as this was one of the teams where managers said they did not believe that stigma of council housing existed.

We were surprised to see Neighbourhood Wardens scored so lowly as they had always had a high satisfaction with residents in the past.

Our recommendations from surveying tenants:

- Make Housing Teams more accessible to contact particularly via the phone.
- More work required dealing with racism in communities.
- More enforcement of the Tenancy Agreement.
- Greater investment into improving neighbourhoods.
- Make sure that Trades staff and Contractors carry out work to the standard they would like in their own home.

Looking at Tenants' Link eBulletin

As part of our investigation, we examined a couple of editions of Tenants' Link (the council monthly housing ebulletin) to get a sense of the language used when communicating with tenants.

While most articles we read appeared, to us, absolutely fine, we did find some that gave us concerns. An article regarding the condition of empty properties was written in such a way that it tarred all tenants as leaving their properties in a poor state. Unfortunately, the articles on Tenants' Link only go back 3 months so are no longer available on the SCC website but the opening two paragraphs of the article were:

Leave your home in good condition

Whenever a council home becomes empty, we work as quickly as possible to get it ready for new tenants to move in. But we often have to deal with mess and damage before a property can be re-let. If you're planning on moving, make sure your home meets our Moving Out Standard before you hand back your keys.



[Read more >](#)

Whenever a council home becomes empty we work as quickly as possible to turn it round and get it ready for new tenants to move into. But frustratingly, we often have to deal with mess and damage left by the outgoing tenant before a property can be re-let.

With thousands of people on the housing register – often waiting many years for a home - it is infuriating when properties are left dirty, full of rubbish, and needing major repairs and redecoration. This all takes time and means that much-needed council homes have to sit empty while we work to make them safe, clean and ready for new occupants.

This we felt came across in a very negative way and reinforced the stigma that tenants do not care for their homes. While we have no doubt that examples of this do happen, we felt it was written in a way that suggested it was the majority of cases rather than the infrequent incident that it may well be¹¹. Words like 'frustratingly' and 'infuriating' should not appear in an article from the council about tenants in our opinion.

Our recommendations:

- Be more aware of language used when writing articles and press releases and ensure that these are checked before being released.

¹¹ When discussing this article it was acknowledged through personal experience that the council do not always reach their own moving in standard when preparing properties for let giving a false impression to tenants.

Looking at other Providers/Good practice examples

As part of the *CIH/See the Person's Guide to Tackling Stigma*, there were numerous instances of good practise from other Housing Providers which are already happening in Southampton. We picked out a few additional examples that SCC might want to think about.

Phoenix Community Housing – as well as their usual panels they also have additional groups included:

- *Policy working group* – where all policies are reviewed and agreed before going to board for adoption.
- *Residents Communications group* – which reads and oversees all correspondence, so that the language used is free from jargon, accessible and in keeping with the values of the organisation.

Many organisations including **Phoenix Community Housing, South Yorkshire Housing Association** and the **Home Group** all have residents on their recruitment panels, with their scores being equally weighted to staff. A group of residents are trained alongside staff in how to conduct strength-based interviews. Some involve customers in writing job adverts and shortlisting too. The approach makes it clear from the outset that the organisation's culture is resident-led and that residents are at the heart of its values and purpose.

There were other key sections in the report worth mentioning too, as in staff being accessible and accountable to tenants. Also, expanding the methods for accessing the organisation including longer contact hours at call centres to improve access. Physical presence, including local offices and staff with good local knowledge on estates, is an important element of developing better relationships, alongside being open and transparent about policies and why decisions have been made, to increase accountability.

The importance of tenant involvement was highlighted, including being clear and honest about the extent of influence that tenants can expect to have; tenants are not fooled or impressed by tokenistic engagement.

Repairs and Maintenance was also a key theme that came from the national survey. They wanted a standard of repairs that housing professionals or councillors would want in their own homes. More careful monitoring of contractors and ensuring high quality of work was called for.

Our recommendations:

Our recommendations from looking at Good Practice

- Involve residents in recruitment to aid new and prospective staff members to realise they are helping to manage people's homes.
- Consider setting up a Policy Working Group and Communication Engagement Group.
- As already mentioned, make reporting issues etc. more accessible
- More careful monitoring of contractors.

Conclusions

Examining Stigma in Southampton's Social Housing has been challenging but fulfilling.

Stigma is not a definitive subject and can affect people in different ways.

As the recent Durham University and University of Leicester's report *Stigma and Social Housing in England*¹² acknowledges, "The Stigma of Social Housing is much more complex than is usually assumed because it intersects with other stigmas such as poverty stigma, crime stigma, mental health and disabilities, and race and immigration stigma."

Speaking to the various managers it was heartening to see the effort they put in to try and reduce stigma in their service areas. We were thankful for their openness when answering questions. We were impressed with the work carried out by some departments, particularly customer services regarding their active listening training, and this is something we feel should be rolled out to all staff.

From surveying tenants there was a strong feeling that an element of stigma came from staff regarding: poor customer care, acting dismissively, not responding to messages, all within a housing department that is difficult to contact.

What came through loud and clear from surveying both staff and tenants was the frustration from the lack of enforcement for those minority of residents who do spoil the image for the vast majority.

Another key idea to reduce stigma from the surveys was continued greater investment in neighbourhoods, therefore giving all residents a greater sense of pride in their area.

It was interesting reading comments from staff and tenants alike which came across as showing their own stigmas at play.

We were pleased to hear that all new council housing built is tenure blind.

Having 47% of staff surveyed saying they are or have been a council tenant we thought was very positive, giving a better understanding of living in Social Housing. We would encourage all vacancies within Housing to be advertised to tenants to increase that percentage further.

We were concerned that managers from some departments were adamant that social housing stigma does not exist, which includes 28% of staff surveyed. What was most worrying to us was that there were clear comments from both staff and tenants that contradicted the viewpoint of these departments.

We think that the vast majority of council staff do a good job and do not act in a stigmatic way, but we have heard enough examples from both staff and tenants to know that stigmatizing of tenants in Southampton does occur by their landlord and by the community at large. This means that this is still a subject that the council should take seriously.

Hearing stories from tenants (including staff that are tenants) who have lost friends and family just because they live in social housing made us very sad indeed.

¹² <https://www.dur.ac.uk/business/research/management/organisation-society/our-research/social-housing/>

We would encourage you to read all the comments made by tenants and staff from our surveys as they make very illuminating reading.

The issues regarding stigma for tenants in Southampton are similar to the national findings, and the key points below from the national report are equally relevant here in Southampton.

Stop

- Talking down to tenants
- Making assumptions about tenants
- Being disrespectful of tenants, of their homes, of their communities
- Tick box tenant involvement/ consultation
- Being uncaring, inconsistent, failing to follow through, ducking difficult issues

Start

- Treat as you want to be treated, with respect
- Listen to, appreciate and act on tenants' concerns
- Keep people informed, use a range of ways to communicate
- Improve the quality of homes and estates
- Have skilled, professional, empathetic and well-trained staff

Our full list of recommendations to tackle and reduce Council Housing Stigma can be found on the next page.

Recommendations

A full list of our recommendations are as follows.

Recommendations		SCC Response
1	Train staff in active listening or Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR). Have tenants involved in the training where possible.	We are looking at a range of training for Staff in communication – part of this will be about listening. Staff have received training in communication skills before, but it is important that is refreshed every now and again. We will be looking at UPR together with any training provider. If it is possible to involve tenants in any training, we will do so.
2	Develop staff training making them aware of issues of stigma	It is important to us as a Housing Service that staff understand that stigma can exist. I am pulling together a Group of Managers to look consider this report and its recommendations to see what we can do and how we should do it. We want to go through all of the comments as there is considerable information in the comments that respondents have made that highlight the issues we need to cover.
3	When creating/modifying policies etc, add to the impact assessment a section on Stigma to show that this area has been considered before plans are introduced.	The ESIA is a corporate document so this recommendation will need to be taken up with the Council's Policy Team – we will do this. For Housing when we are looking at Policies and updating them then we will consider stigma while carrying out this work.
4	Ensure better communication and transparency regarding the services that the various housing departments offer (or cannot offer) to improve tenants' understanding of the system through FAQs in Tenants' Link etc.	The Housing Service do already communicate considerably through Tenants Link and other means but we will look at the web-site and see what we can do to make improvement – equally if as tenants you see areas of the web-site where you think we could make improvements then please let us know so that this can be directed to the right individual(s) to make the necessary improvements.
5	Make sure that policies and strategies are on the website with full public access.	This is being completed now.

Recommendations		SCC Response
6	Increase investment in improving neighbourhoods, talking to residents first to help give them a sense of ownership in the improvements.	We invest a lot in neighbourhoods and this is done mainly through two sources of money – the Decent Neighbourhood pot managed by Aidan and Becky and they do consult with residents on the schemes that they manage; and the EIP pot that is held by the LHOs – again they do consult with residents on the spend from this pot – they will be reminded from this work that consultation is essential in the schemes they are managing.
7	More enforcement of the Tenancy Agreement.	We do enforce the Tenancy Agreement where this is possible. We take Legal Advice. The end result may not always be what the complainant wants but that does not mean that cases are not investigated and where necessary court action takes place.
8	Make the Housing Dept. more accessible to contact particularly via the phone.	The LHOs are contactable via the phone. The CO&D Team are contactable by phone. Phone calls for Repairs go through our Customer Contact Centre.
9	Ensure all vacancies within Housing are advertised to council tenants.	SCC has a recruitment process with all jobs initially have to go through our Redeployment Register for those staff who if they do not find a job will be made redundant after a period of time. Jobs then have to be advertised internally. They are then advertised externally – at that time anyone can apply – they are advertised on the council's web-site and accessible to all.
10	More work required dealing with racism in communities.	We will always tackle racism if we encounter it. Tenants can contact the Hate Crime Network or report in to their LHO.
11	Ensure that trades staff and contractors carry out work to the standard they would like in their own home.	Agreed and they should be meeting the standard we expect.

Recommendations		SCC Response
12	More careful monitoring of contractors.	We do monitor other contractors if we are using them as Sub-contractors. The Property Team also will be monitoring contractors that they use for any capital work. If tenants have any concerns, then please report those concerns – we do not have the staff on site with a contractor 24/7 so monitoring by tenants is welcome.
13	Involve residents in recruitment to aid new and prospective staff members to realise they are helping to manage people's homes.	We have involved tenants to help with recruitment – the most recent example being the new Community Workers that we have employed. WE will use tenants in recruitment where appropriate to do so.
14	Consider setting up a Policy Working Group and Communication Engagement Group.	We will consider this.
15	Be more aware of language used when writing articles and press releases and ensure that these are checked before being released.	We will and this will be passed on to the Comms Team and our Tenants Link writer. All press releases are checked before they go to the press.
16	Managers to encourage staff to participate more in external surveys as they can highlight positive staff actions as well as allowing staff freedom of anonymised feedback.	Staff are always encouraged to complete surveys and are given time to do so.
17	Managers undertake additional training to better provide a supportive and secure environment for staff to feel able to raise their issues.	Managers are currently carrying out staff 1-2-1s every 4/6 weeks – they also conduct an annual PDR (Performance Development Review) – there are secure environments for staff to discuss anything with their own Manager – if necessary, they can discuss with another Manager if they would rather initially do so. There is Manager training over a range of topics that Managers can go on and this include managing staff.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Unconditional Positive Regard or UPR

By Magenta Catz

Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) is a technical method used by therapists and counsellors when working with clients. But, what does it actually mean?

Adapted from Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

Unconditional positive regard, a concept initially developed by Stanley Standal in 1954, later expanded and popularized by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers in 1956, is the basic acceptance and support of a person regardless of what the person says or does, especially in the context of client-centered therapy.

So, that's the therapeutic definition but, how does that translate into a working method that's useful in our day-to-day communication with tenants and colleagues?

Basically, it is about approaching each and every conversation with no preconceived ideas, thoughts or answers. Even if you have had the same conversation 100 times with 100 different people you have to look at it as if it's the first time you are having it. Not easy, I'll grant you that, especially when your conversations and answers are guided by policy and procedure.

It's a big part of the active listening process that people always talk about in customer service training. It can make whomever you are talking to feel that you are totally with them, focused on hearing them and helping them. It's about making them feel empowered, encouraged and validated, even if we are aware that there is nothing that can be done at this present time. It's also about making them feel that you are invested in their situation and that it is as much a priority to you as it is to them. After all don't we all like to believe that we and our opinions are as equal and valid as everybody else's.

It's not easy to do this and we all make mistakes and say the wrong thing at the wrong time on occasion. Good communication however is the key to any relationship, whether it be between colleagues, tenants or companies. It can make the difference between success and failure, between happy productive working environments and negativity and low staff moral and even between doing something we are proud of or just ticking boxes till the end of the working day.

UPR can be used in every communication interaction that we have on every level, every day. It can help those who use it feel that they have respected others and can make those who receive it from us feel like an individual rather than just a number or one of thousands tarred with the same brush. And strangely it is catching, when people feel they are respected and heard they start to become more respectful and better listener's (well most of them).

UPR was originally designed for use in therapy services to allow people to feel unjudged, valid, respected and treated as a unique individual. I think that over time it has developed to a place where everyone could use it and if they did, we could all feel that way. Isn't that we all want? Isn't that what we are all working towards with diversity, equality and seeing the individual? I know I certainly do.

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Appendix 2

Staff Questionnaire: Stigma in Council Housing



We are the Tenant Inspectors, a small group of tenants from across the city who investigate different areas of the housing service. We are currently examining *Stigma surrounding council housing*.

As staff who work as part of Council Housing we would appreciate your views on stigma, and your ideas on what the Council can do to tackle it.

All information will be treated anonymously.

About you

1) Which team do you currently work in? _____

2) How many years have you worked for the council?

3) Are you currently or formerly a council tenant? Yes No

Our definition of Council Housing Stigma is: “treating council tenants as inferior, assuming tenants as poor, uneducated, lazy and reliant on benefits. It is about defining tenants due to their tenure rather than as individuals.”

4) Would you change or add anything to our definition of stigma as listed above?

Thinking about your work in Southampton City Council

5) Have you encountered the effects of stigma either in your tenant interactions or from other staff members? Yes No

If yes, can you briefly explain your encounter(s)

6) Do you think it would be beneficial to receive specific training on tackling stigma? Yes No

7) From your experience, do you feel the levels of stigma felt by tenants are increasing or decreasing? Increasing Staying the same Decreasing

8) From your experience, do you feel the levels of stigma felt by colleagues are increasing or decreasing? Increasing Staying the same Decreasing

9) Do you feel comfortable/confident in taking any issues around stigma to senior staff?

Yes No

10) How confident do you feel that the council deals with issues of stigma? Please indicate on the scale.

(1 = no confidence 5 = very confident)



Other Comments

11) Do you have any ideas about how the council could do better at challenging the issues of stigma?

Four horizontal lines for writing answers to question 11.

12) Do you have any other comments you would like to make about Council Housing Stigma?

Five horizontal lines for writing answers to question 12.

Thank you for completing this survey! Please return it to the Tenant Engagement Team by the *th of March 2021 in the internal post or email tenant.engagement@southampton.gov.uk. All information will be treated anonymously.

The legal bit: Southampton City Council, on behalf of the Tenant Inspectors, are asking you for information for the purposes of their current inspection. We will share the statistical data from this survey within the Housing teams. Our Privacy Policy (<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/privacy>) explains how we handle your personal data, and we can provide a copy if you are unable to access the Internet.

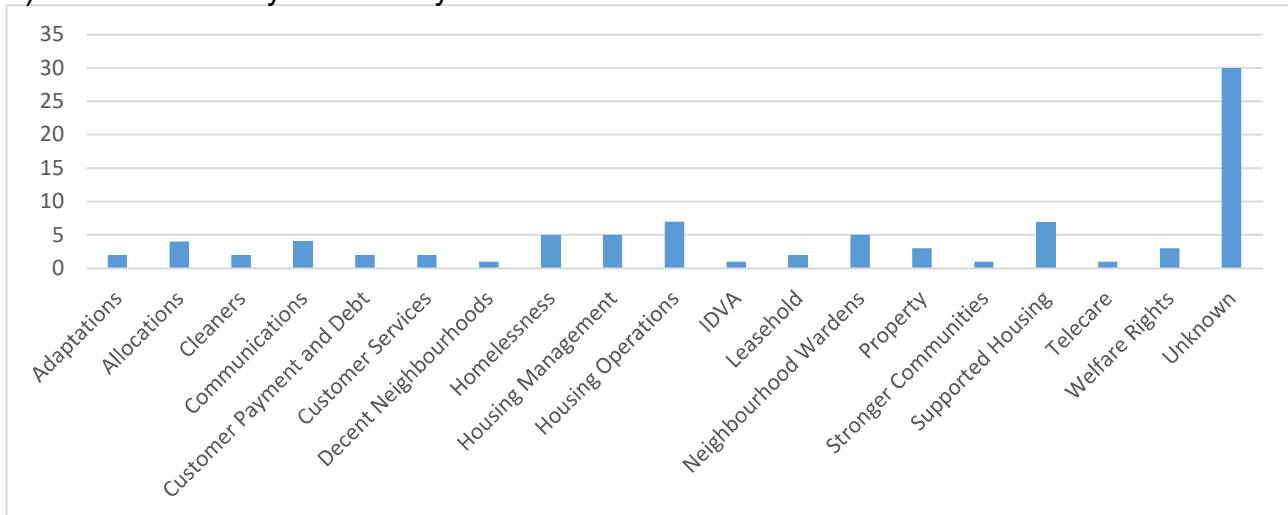
Appendix 3

Staff Questionnaire: Stigma in Council Housing - Results

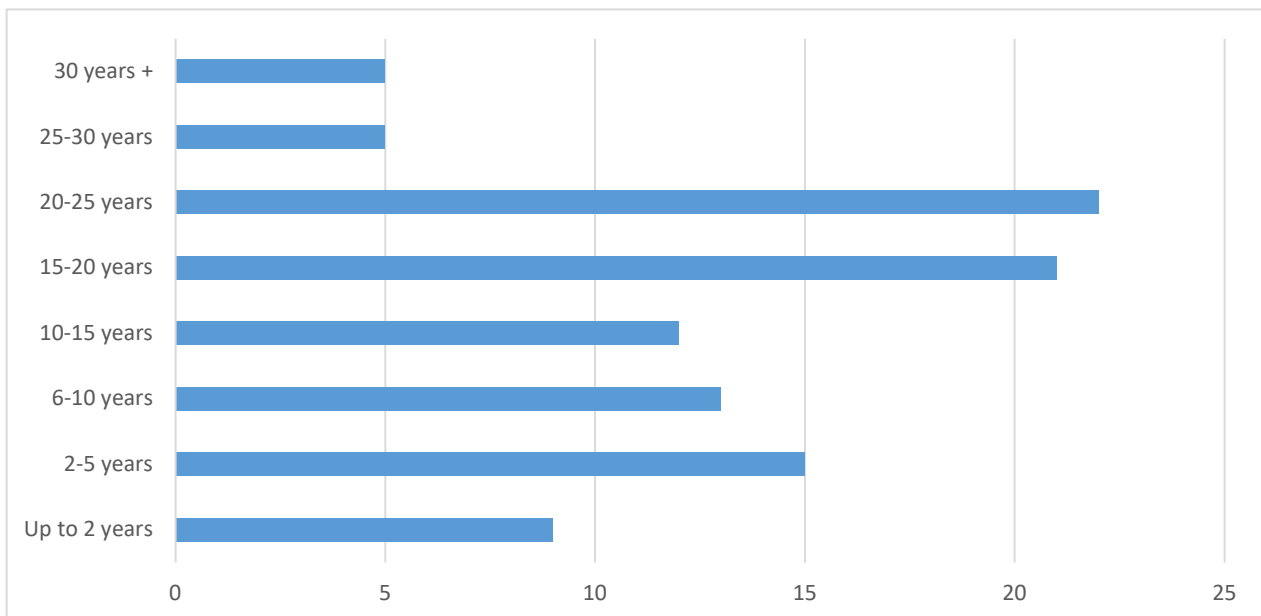
87 responses received

About you

1) Which team do you currently work in?

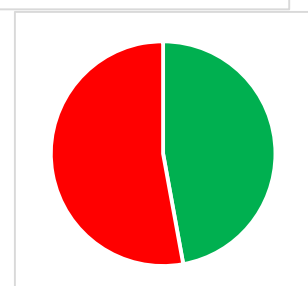


2) How many years have you worked for the council?



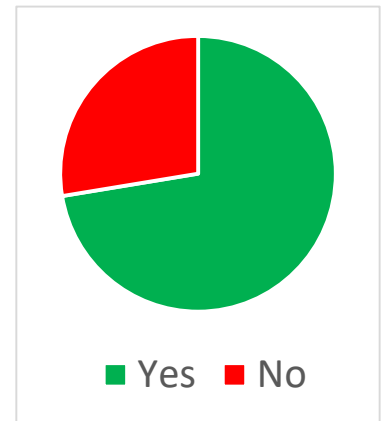
3) Are you currently or formerly a council tenant?

Yes: 41 (47%)
 No: 46 (53%)

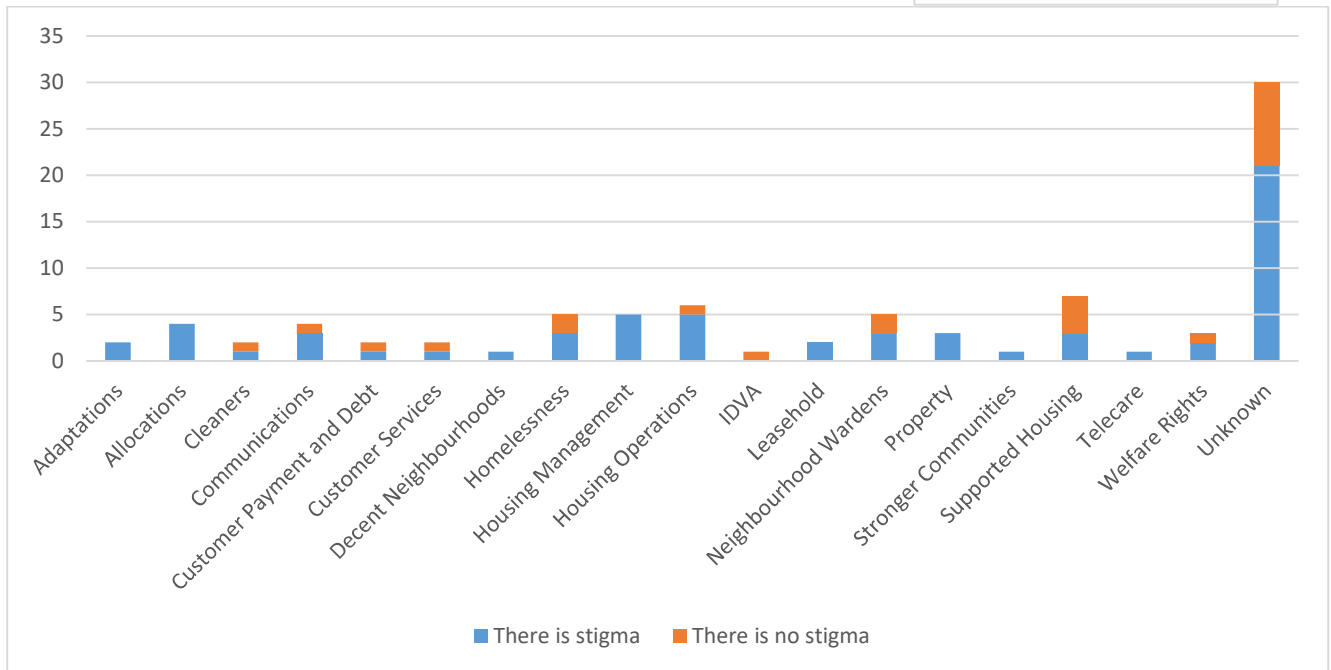


4) Do you think there is a stigma associated with Social Housing?

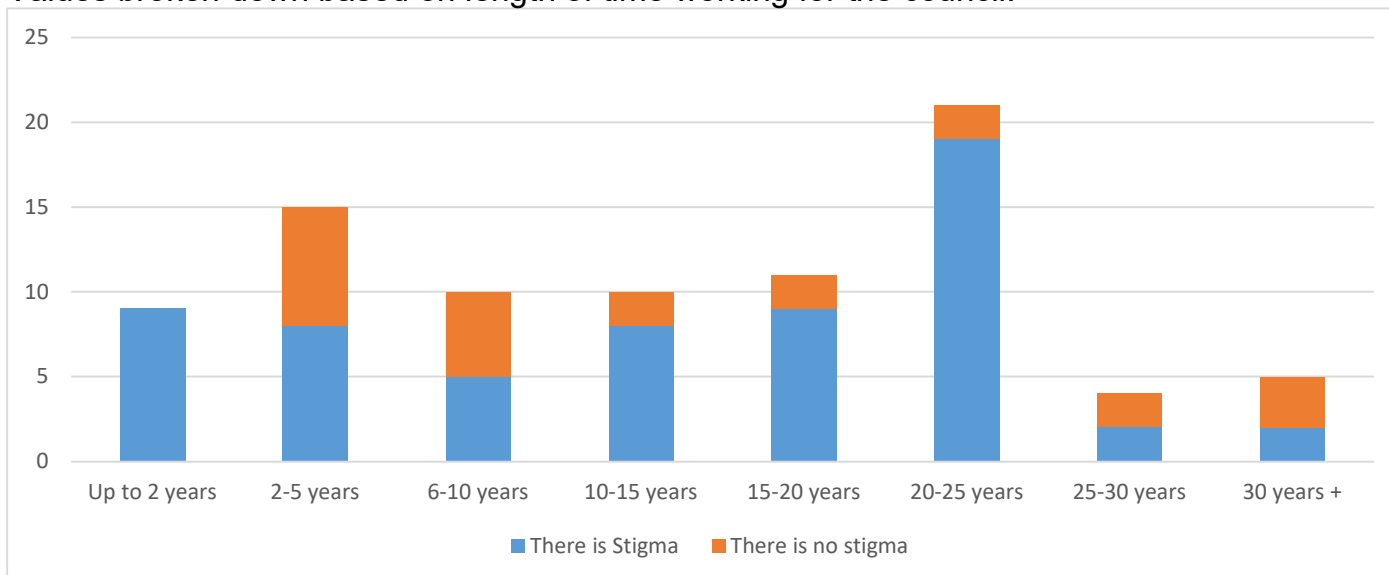
Yes: 63 (72%)
 No: 24 (28%)



Values broken down split by teams.



Values broken down based on length of time working for the council.



Those who indicated they did not think there was a stigma of social housing were diverted to the end of the survey and did not answer the remaining questions.

Our definition of Council Housing Stigma is: “treating council tenants as inferior, assuming tenants as poor, uneducated, lazy and reliant on benefits. It is about defining tenants due to their tenure rather than as individuals.”

5) Would you change or add anything to our definition of stigma as listed above?

Comments in agreement with the definition

No that pretty well sums it up.

*No [amendments needed] (*18)*

No I think that is how people see a lot of our tenants, but I know this is not true for a lot of our tenants

No, I think your definition of what Council Housing Stigma is, is spot on.

No I think the above is the stigma

No this seems an accurate description of the way Council tenants are portrayed in the media and in other areas of society.

No I think it is a very good definition.

Comments suggesting amendments with the definition

I would add that it's the property's/neighbourhood as well - some are too quick to accept poor standards because it's a Council house and not private.

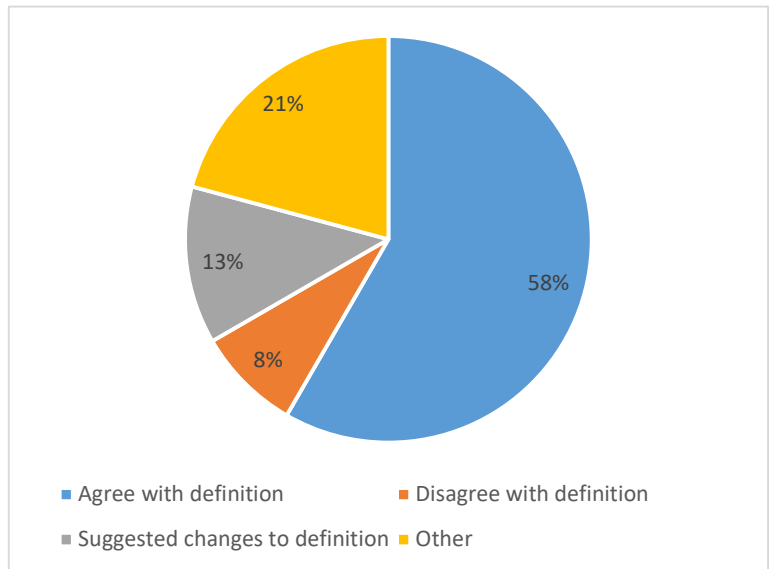
I wouldn't include "treating council tenants as inferior...." as part of the definition. This is a consequence of stigma not the definition

I think the last sentence 'It is about defining tenants due to their tenure rather than as individuals.' need some more detail or the word 'tenure' changes to 'socioeconomic status' as the issue covers more than just tenure

Comments disagreeing with the definition

tenures are abused because tenants know they can get away with it and do

The whole definition is wrong. Each tenant is different, with different needs and although some may be lazy & reliant on benefits some



I think that definition is almost spot on, some people think you are second class and not as successful because of where you live. I was bought up in a home owned by my parents and now I live in a council property and even though I work I still feel people judge me because of where I live.

Yes.

I think your definition is accurate. It's about stereotyping council tenants as all being the same, as somehow being second class citizens based purely on the lifestyles and behaviour of a small minority of people.

A lot of people think they are single parents being a council tenant or immigrants.

I think the adjectives used are somewhat extreme.

Yes. Having previously lived in Council housing myself I do feel this statement is rather inflammatory in terms of the use of the word 'inferior'. Something around a reliance on a benefits culture I definitely agree with and the statement around tenure also. I think something could be added around the lack of aspirations for some households in reading work carried out on this elsewhere.

are hard working, proud individuals who try their best to look after their home and support their family.

Although I think there is a stigma, I do not have one and believe that the majority of our residents do not have a stigma about it either.

Other Comments

A lot of people think that council tenants get all work on property done for nothing, they claim benefits, don't work, bring the neighbourhood down as they don't look after their property or gardens, dump rubbish out the front. I don't think that council tenants are inferior, poor or uneducated but have seen on many occasions a lot of tenants that are lazy as they know the council will fix things for them & they do rely on a lot of benefits, this causes more jealousy to other property owners as not only are they getting things fixed for nothing they often don't even pay full rent if claiming housing benefit.

The way some of them treat the properties very poorly

The way they think if they keep having more kids they will get bigger properties

There is a lot more to say about this. Due to lack of new builds and the shrinking of stock, The pressure to house those most in need only, has led to a process of residualisation, meaning the percentage of tenants now with complex needs, which can often mean much harder to manage, impact greatly on other existing tenants. this impacts the ability to manage the service effectively due to less properties (so less income) but greater demands on the service (more complex issues to resolve). This residualisation means that all tenants are judged by people from the outside looking in as the same. There is a growing percentage of complex tenants, and the image that gives owners and private renters outside of council housing, is that all tenants are the same as the most problematic cases. this is why it is perceived in such a stigmatised way. The only solution is to build more and put far more resources into it. This does not look likely any time soon, and as such the stigma is unlikely to go away either.

social housing.

I think the stigma isn't about the people but more the state of the properties. You can tell a council estate by the number of caravans, trailers, Christmas lights up throughout the year etc.

many tenants actually work for a living. Unfortunately there are many that think they should have everything they ask for and not have to do anything to get it. I think this is down to society and expectations of people. I do not think there is a stigma apart from the ones that say there is. I know this is not true of myself and many others and is not how I feel.

people used to, I think speak about people in council housing in a way that they tend to think its a poor society but I work and earn good money and I choose to live in the way I do it's not because I have to I like where I live and I love the places around me and just because they are blocks of flats and to some the benefit bums or less fortunate is there issue not ours , great believer in unless you have experienced it or done it in life then you should have no opinion because you know nothing of what you are trying to talk about"

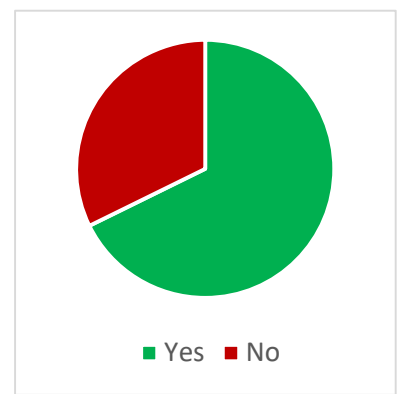
I think as soon as we use words like inferior, assuming tenants are uneducated and tenants are lazy and live on benefits we immediately look on them as inferior. I would use words like providing affordable homes for those who may not be able to afford a mortgage, a service where we are listening to our customers.

No respect for our properties

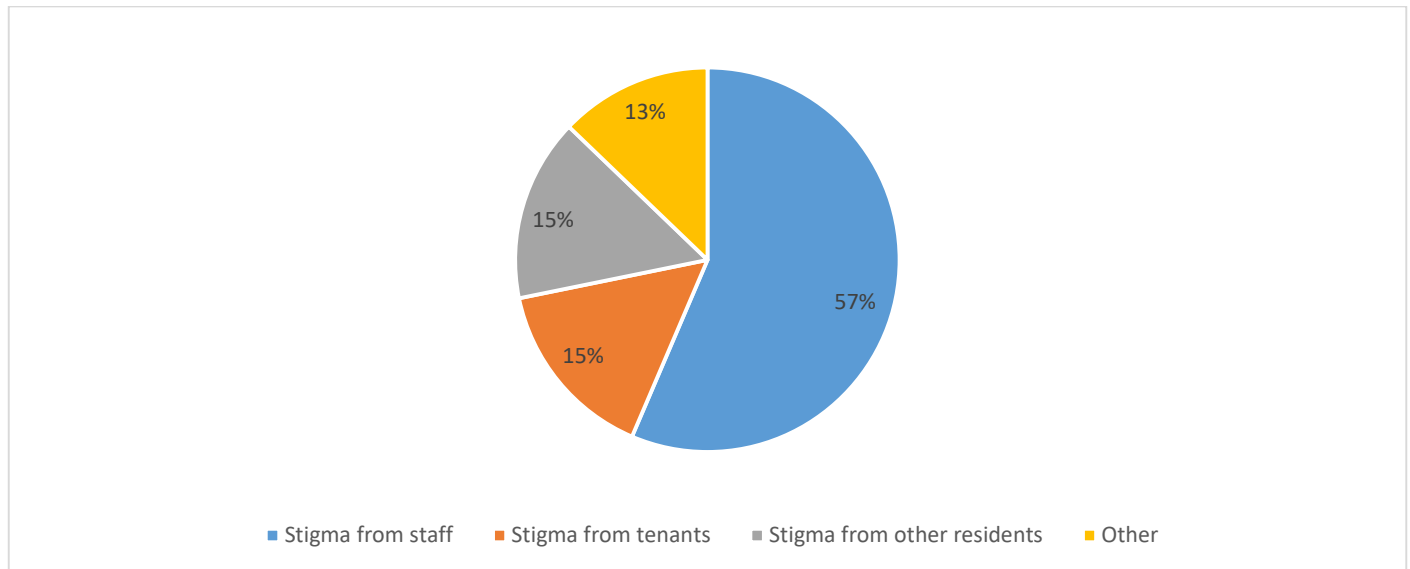
yes get police to respect us and not tar us all as single mothers or on benefits. having more money to improve areas around blocks and if the blocks need painting just get on a paint them simplify the process and if a company does a bad job take them to court or not use them again. when a company/ workmen come in to a building treat with some respect and not to a half arse job as they don't care as its only "council housing"

6) Have you encountered the effects of stigma either in your tenant interactions or from other staff members?

Yes: 42 (68%)
 No: 20 (32%)



If yes, can you briefly explain your encounter(s)



Comments indicating stigma from staff

Some staff definitely think people who don't own their property are failures. that they are lazy. that they are stupid. that if they achieved buying a house why can't they. Many staff are not like this but there is a significant minority who are.

Lack of respect for both tenants and their property is far too prevalent

Occasional comment from Trade Staff - not regular and some time ago about 'they are on benefit so should be OK with any repair' - really a one off and as I said some time ago.

Officers not taking into account that a property is someone's home (e.g. dirty boots, ""it's only a Council property"", not respectful that the property is someone's home. Assumptions being made about how rent is covered ""They don't pay their rent, it is paid by benefits"", this may be untrue, and also why should someone deserve a lesser service based on their welfare benefit status.

I have witnessed an attitude that tenants should be grateful for anything we do, even when it is our legal obligation as a landlord.

Made to feel you want everything for nothing eg housing repairs

yes I have heard some comments from different members of staff over the years working for the council

Sometimes people treating as inferior and looking down on Council Tenants.

I have experienced colleagues making derogatory remarks about tenants whom they do not know based on the fact they live in council housing.

A belief that Council tenants are given 'too much'

negative assumptions OCCASSIONALLY made. OCCASIONALLYnegative attitudes / behaviour adopted towards customers

there appears to be an element of surprise amongst colleagues, if you declare you are a council tenant.

Residents often think we do not care about them because they are in council housing, but they dont realise that some of us actually live in council housing ourselves.

Some staff believe all tenants are lazy and don't want to work when this is not the case.

At a workshop on adaptations when discussing choice for tenants over products an SCC surveyor made the comment that the properties are ours and we can do what we like with them

Sometimes private tenants (incl leaseholders) stigmatise council tenants. Some staff generalise/stereotype about council tenants.

people do tend to look down on council tenants

On occasion when I have explained to another member of staff the landscaping improvements we are planning for an area their attitude has been that we shouldn't bother making improvements because residents wouldn't respect them and they would be vandalised. However, it has to be said that this is only a very small minority of staff, most staff aren't prejudiced in this way.

I have heard of people speaking of council tenant sometimes as your description says

Comments indicating stigma from tenants

Too wide to encompass. I think there is an underlying feeling that 'tradition' has entrenched the belief on the part of a lot of tenants that they are 'entitled' to everything the Council provides from 1 generation to the next and that they can talk to staff in the rudest possible way

Staff become frustrated when tenants state they cannot pay rent due to Christmas, birthdays, deaths and school uniforms. Tenants do not like it when confronted and use rent as an interest free loan. They know that nothing much will happen and they are correct.

Comments indicating stigma from other residents

Working with people who have purchased their properties either through the RTB scheme or on the open market we often have to deal with comments and complaints which are directed at Council tenants. The main reasons being that some leaseholders believe that Council tenants rely on benefits and don't pay their way/ are the main cause of ASB/ don't care about the area they live in.

I see on a regular basis evidence to support the council housing stigma that a fair proportion of tenants do not look after their properties as I am a void inspection manager, I witness other managers and trade staff commenting on the poor condition of properties and outside spaces.

Assumptions made about people who live in a certain area - again assuming everyone living on that estate are exactly the same. This assumption wouldn't be made on a private estate.

a police man asked if I was in the right building as I had a copy of the I newspaper. a taxi driver telling me how that tower block is full ofsingle mums/druggies/polish/benefits plumbers not fussed about finding a leak as this tower block always leaks. housing officer staff making comments about "all you lot" and the all time classic from "well what do you expect its social housing"

Tenants saying they are aware of the stigma and feeling the need to justify they are not part of the stereotypes.

Persons calling tend to feel they are owed something if in council properties and even more so if they are a working family and not claiming benefits

When speaking with tenants they feel there owed something being a council tenant.

When working as a housing officer some tenants have this view of other tenants.

Words like.....your just a council tenant, I'm a home owner. The stigma is one of ego and snobbery from those that own their homes. Home owners believe council tenants have a free ride.

as I explained before, oh you live on an estate, my answer is simple, ok next question?

I was speaking to a client who did not want to be in council housing due to the type of people that he perceived to be living in this sort of accommodation. He mentioned people on benefits but also seemed to think that council housing was full of people who had suffered domestic abuse. He also had a major issue with anyone of any ethnic origin and was obviously quite unhinged. I spoke to a more reasonable client on another occasion and he did not want to be housed into council housing as his wife suffered from anxiety and he felt that she would not cope in an area where there could be anti-social behaviour.

Prior to joining SCC I worked for a housing association. I experienced many issues of stigmatisation, especially on mixed tenure housing developments complaints about untidy gardens, anti social behaviour, rowdy, noisy, loud, abusive, drunken, late night partying, not paying rent, having everything done for them for free. Private owners complaining that they paid a lot of money to purchase their properties, if they'd known they would be living next door to social housing tenants they wouldn't have bought. Some private owners obtained legal advice to take the building contractor to court about not being told about the social housing properties.

Other Comments

accept poor standards

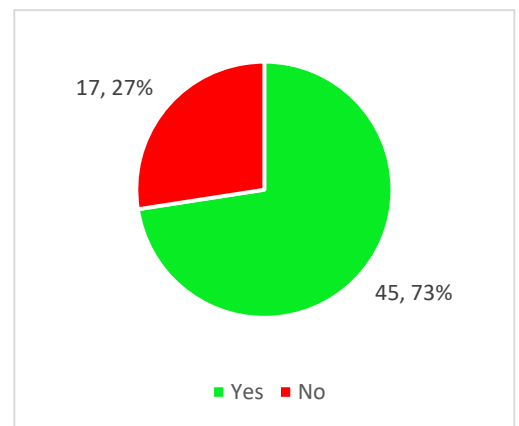
Mediation numbers, non-payment of rent and neglect of gardens associated with rented properties and open spaces

Please see answer to question 5

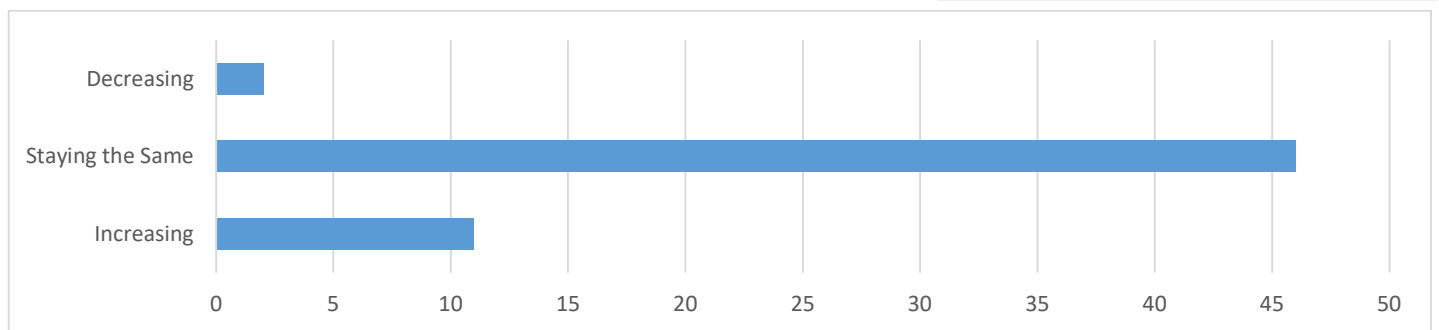
tenant would withdraw, and their self-worth was affected.

Don't want to say now I work for the council

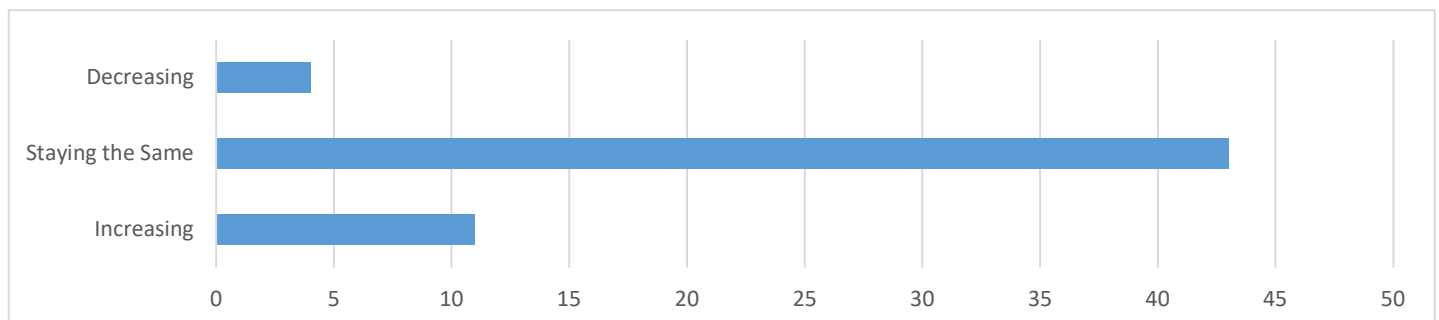
7) Do you think it would be beneficial to receive specific training on tackling stigma?



8) From your experience, do you feel the levels of stigma felt by tenants are increasing or decreasing?

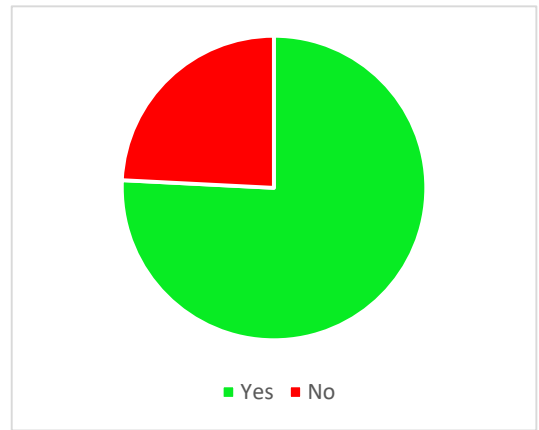


9) From your experience, do you feel the levels of stigma felt by colleagues are increasing or decreasing?



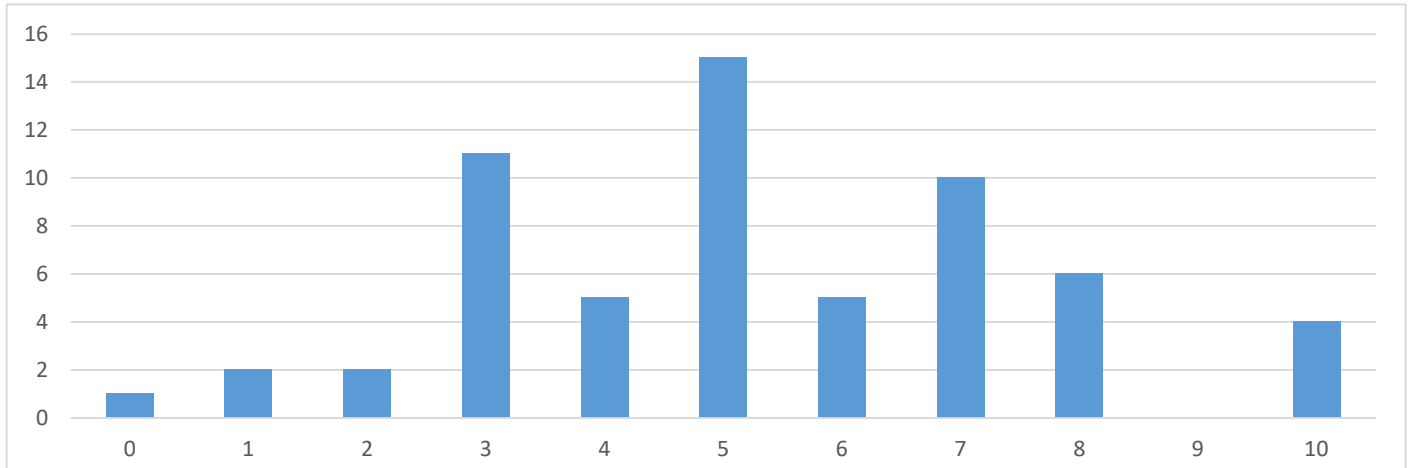
10) Do you feel comfortable/confident in taking any issues around stigma to senior staff?

Yes: 47 (76%)
 No: 15 (24%)



11) How confident do you feel that the council deals with issues of stigma? Please indicate on the scale.

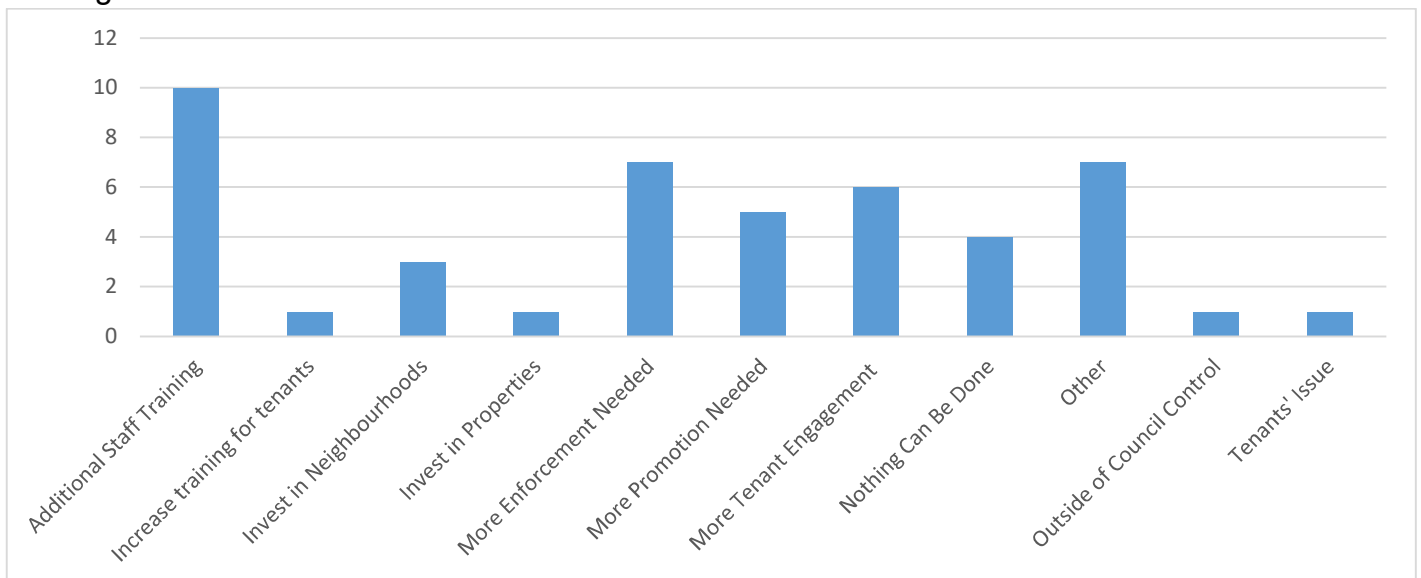
(0 = no confidence 10 = very confident)



Confident: 41%, Neutral 25%, Not Confident 34%. Average score of 5.3

Other Comments

12) Do you have any ideas about how the council could do better at challenging the issues of stigma?



Comments suggesting additional staff training

Training for all staff, once completed instances of staff stigmatising tenants should be dealt with as a disciplinary issue.

pulling people up on it and not letting comments slide Pull workmen of site if they are being disrespectful

Staff training on how we interact, language we use and having empathy for tenants who face difficult circumstances. I think some of the behaviours and attitudes are embedded in the culture of some teams/services

Certain areas of the workforce would benefit from training (trades staff who visit people in their home). I am not saying that this is an issue for all trades staff, but this is the area that I have personally witnessed unprofessional attitudes. It is often quite difficult to pinpoint examples as it is often quite subtle, and can be masked.

training... helping staff step back & see the wider perspective. Often staff deal with the most difficult, challenging customers which can be closer to the stereotypes. this will reinforce stigma, but, it's important to remember that larger proportion of customers (the ones that staff often don't have cause to talk to), do not fit the stereotypes & are positive role models / good citizens.

Comments suggesting stronger enforcement of tenancies

Unfortunately there are a few tenants that do not look after their property which is evident as you drive past, which can give the whole neighbourhood a bad name. Unfortunately it is generally these same tenants when you visit them feel that they are entitled and that the council should do more for them. Most tenants in my experience look after their properties and maybe the council could do more to tackle the issues of tenants who do not/cannot look after their property inc the garden. Often it is the outward appearance that gives people a bad reputation from others of not caring, uneducated etc.

Comments suggesting greater tenant engagement

Inviting more young people to become involved in their local community/ tenant groups by providing more online options.

Comments suggesting more promotion about the benefits of Council Housing

There needs to be greater awareness made of the issues and myths that are associated with Council housing, across all areas of the communications published by the council. #Social Housing Lives Matter.

Between the 2 World Wars it was seen as a privilege to get a council tenancy. I don't think enough is made of the amount of services tenants receive at very little or no cost - the advantages should be publicised more.

More positive stories in Tenants Link, publish more positive issues, try not to link our service with some other national authorities who do not perform to well.

This is difficult because it's a much wider issue, affected by the media and society as a whole but I think some sort of training for staff could be a step in the right direction and would emphasis that Council tenants (as with wider society) represent a wide range of incomes, educational attainment, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs etc

education

Better training for staff

Stigma is due to behaviours of tenants not the council

Make council tenants pay for damage to their properties, make them keep the property in a good condition outside as well as inside e.g. cutting the grass, taking their rubbish to the tip like non council tenants do

I think personally we do so so so much , a lot more than other councils across the UK and I think that we have ended up in a molly coddle situation in Southampton

I'm glad we have tried to help people but now people are taking the mickey

Ask tenants but not just the current panels?

Understanding WHY people become council tenants. I'm also not sure a lot of people understand how you're able to get a council house and how it works. Perhaps something about financials too? e.g. the criteria and how much on the breadline some people are in the city.

Raise awareness, an article in tenants link and staff/tenant information made available. Also link to national work being carried out on this topic currently - Housing Quality Network.

Comments suggesting greater investment in neighbourhoods

Make our estates look better.

Focusing on further improving external appearance around communal blocks and towers would help, e.g keeping grass areas cut shorter and looking better cared for, planting shrubs etc. This also raises the well-being and moral of residents.

Comments suggesting multiple ideas

More enforcement is needed to improve the outside areas. Offer more support to tenants to improve outside spaces (offer to come up with garden designs etc to show what it could look like). It's about making tenants feel their council property is their home. As well as enforcing against bad behaviour, reward good behaviour (most time is spent dealing with issues and difficult people) - how about a most improved block competition. It's about encouraging pride and ownership. Rather than just place improvement items on estates, engage with residents first to make sure it is what they want and that any improvements will be respected. If residents (particularly kids) think they've been involved with the design and build they are more likely to respect it. Rather than telling residents what they can't have (ie a paddling pool in a communal block) work with residents about what they can have or come up with some positive solutions.

Update the blocks to make them more 'desirable' to live in - paint them, add incentives for outside areas - allow more communal areas - involve residents to decision making in their own blocks - safe places (lockers) for parcels to be kept in in blocks.

Keep the areas more clean and have staff take pride in their jobs in the areas on the estates - repairs to be carried out quicker in the communal areas - cleaning standards to be raised both in the block and to our VOID properties.

Respond and take mould and damp complaints more seriously and other repairs that could be embarrassing for residents (broken/outdated kitchens etc)

Offer Dec Vouchers again instead of just White paint

Be more strict on Rent arrears

Be more strict following the tenancy agreement.

Regular training and regular meetings with tenants to hear their views should be a priority. It's important the wider council meet and discuss with tenants what they would like to see changed and how. We need to make more of an effort with understanding tenant concerns and working together to combat them.

More training for staff to dispel the myths propagated by the media, around Council tenants behaviour. Providing Council tenants with more employment opportunities, improve standards of Council housing and bring them in line with housing association properties

Have robust policies and procedures in place so that the tenants cannot live up to that definition. Tackle anti social behaviour, deal with the problems not move them around the city. Have the backbone to take enforcement action. COLLECT RENT and use the money to develop the estates. Improve the environment, make tenants proud of the area they live in.

Many Southampton council housing is on large estates where most tenants will experience the same difficulties/issues i.e. unemployment, benefit issues, mental health, drug/alcohol misuse. Target the poorer deprived areas by funding appropriate services. Some SCC housing areas look dilapidated, unkempt, visible build up of refuse, fly tipping and bulk waste - doesn't help with dismissing council housing stigma. Work collaboratively with cash rich RSL's to develop and increase housing.

Since joining SCC I haven't had too many reports of stigmatism from tenants, a few have complained about the time they have had to wait for repairs, and feel they are second class citizens.

Comments suggesting nothing can be done / outside council control

It's a bigger issue, it's a government policy issue

They can't

I don't think there is anything possible for it is do with snobbery, ego.

Other comments

CIH has some good ideas around the language we use, such as using the word vulnerable.

<https://www.cih.org/media/wlmc11bd/0456-its-not-okay-v2.pdf>

Recruit people who recognise discrimination in all its forms and have the confidence and support to challenge. and

no matter what they do it is not the Council employees that think tenants are awful it is the tenants themselves when they can't get their own way.

Management should clearly state to staff that this is not acceptable behaviour

I honestly do not think the issue does not need to be addressed as people will continue to have their opinions and I do not think it is as bad as it was many years ago

No as it is always portrayed on TV like that.

Education in schools

The problem I have is that the good tenants who really care about their surroundings and maintain their properties do not often move. I deal with a lot of properties within the poorer areas of the city and this reflects the behaviour of some of the tenants and their responsibilities of being a council tenant. Educating tenants about maintaining an acceptable living standard and maintaining their own homes would improve the stigma around council tenants. These may be considered to be generalised and unscientific comments but I can only relay what I experience on a daily basis.

12) Do you have any other comments you would like to make about Council Housing Stigma?

The stigma is a national issue it can't be resolved locally

I think this is a really worthwhile piece of research - well done!

It is the behaviours of the tenants observed by society that create the stigma

I think the stigma has got worse since the COVID as some property owners have lost their jobs, been put on furlough unable to claim benefits (one partner may still be working), they end up losing their home as unable to pay bills etc. This puts more strain on council re housing these people. People see council tenants getting everything done for them during this time & it causes more problems.

This comes from the top down I once sat in a meeting and a senior manager said "I know most of our tenants can't read".

It hurts. It hurts my family as my children have lost friends due to the parents refusing to let them socialise with tower block kids / council estate kids. friends and family not coming over due to the fear that only bad people/ poor people live in tower blocks.

There is no stigma. The Council is doing the best it can to make sure everyone has a nice place to live and it is up to the tenants to keep it that way. If this was the stigma why do many people buy properties from the Council as it is social housing for those in need. It is attitude of tenants that believed they are owed and have to do nothing in return. I have never heard this stigma from anyone that I know. I am a tenant and employee the stigma is made by the people who live in properties and is the way they feel. They are not made to feel that way at all.

Question- within social housing, is the % of vulnerable people with challenging behaviour, known to Children / Adult services, on benefits, with chaotic life style (features that arguably contribute the stigma) greater when compared to private rented? If the answer is yes, then this difficult topic needs to be addressed.

I think the tenant team at the council do an excellent job of trying to link the wider council with tenants and tenant concerns, but it's now up to the wider council to play their part.

Thatcherism has made most of society selfish. It's going to be a huge mountain to climb to redress that attitude and it can't be done just by us changing certain things.

If there was more social housing built we would be able to house a greater range of people ie housing for the many rather marginalised few then this may help?

The design of some of the houses in my opinion could be better. Many flats do not have balconies and this would be an addition for those flats to be more attractive. Also I believe yearly inspections or 2 yearly inspections looking at the state of the properties would be a good idea. Also to relax what improvements council tenants could do to improve their home. Also to promote council housing as a home to care for, look after and to promote the council as a very good landlord with support networks in place.

Employees who have been in housing for a number of years become cynical and unsupportive they are no longer passionate about supporting council tenants. Need to improve and make working with tenants more rewarding and satisfying, refresh the skill sets, increase salary bands.

I'd be interested to know what the ratio of Council Tenants / Private Renters/ Homeowners was in the council staff members. We are aware that the "face and diversity of the Council" needs to change, but perhaps the staff should actually live in the area. Oh I see a problem with employment law there....

I think that the Right to Buy scheme has contributed to the problem of stigma in Council housing because those who are able to can purchase their homes which leaves behind those without the means to do so. This exacerbates the idea that those in Council housing are on low incomes or benefits and have no option but to remain in Council housing. Also, RTB has meant that much of the most desirable housing stock has been sold off which again I think exacerbates the issue of Council housing stigma.

There are many services that the council provide and they are great and we are one of the best councils in the uk however because it is not managed properly it most of the time fails and some of the schemes we do to help people disappear but then come back but in a different name but still managed by the same management or same mentality of management as before and it folds again

We need new and fresh blood in a lot of our services across the council as we have a lot of stale and hanger on's that are waiting on the retirement age then leave but in the mean time the service we are trying to provide suffers

Maybe we need to look at redundancies ,it may cost at the beginning but we would save so much money and get a great service ,even with changes you would notice the difference in the first 5 years but I am a small person so this will go unnoticed and it will not happen main thing is if this was private business owned by someone , it would of gone under a long time ago with some of the ways it works

I have dealt with quite a few clients over the years who have reported serious anti-social behaviour issues with their council tenant neighbours, probably more than have reported these issues with privately rented neighbours. Considering the number of council properties compared to private properties in Southampton, could there be a valid reason for Council Housing Stigma? I realise that it could be that I have worked in Allocations and now work in Homelessness and Housing Advice, and could therefore have a skewed experience of this issue. Maybe I do need some training focussed on Council Housing Stigma after all?!

There was no option on some questions to put I do not know. I marked that stigma has stayed the same but I do not know. Celebrate the positives within the service

Not certain I could answer the questions to 9 and 10 in this survey as not sure what all staff/customers feel.

Appendix 4

Tenant Questionnaire: Your views on being a Council Tenant



We are the Tenant Inspectors, a small group of tenants from across the city that look into different areas of the housing service. We are currently examining *Stigma surrounding council housing*.

Stigma of Council Housing means being discriminated against in any way due to being a council tenant.

We would appreciate your views about how you find being a Council Tenant and your experience of dealing with Council Staff. ***Please feel free to continue any answers on a separate sheet if necessary.***

As a token of our thanks, you can enter a free prize draw to win one of two £20 supermarket vouchers.

About you

1) How many years have you been a Council Tenant? _____

2) What type of property do you live in?

House	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maisonette	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tower Block	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supported Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state) _____	

3) Please indicate which age bracket you fit into.

Under 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
30-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
50-70	<input type="checkbox"/>
70+	<input type="checkbox"/>

4) What is your postcode? _____

Your experiences of being a Southampton City Council tenant

5) What do you like about being a council tenant? _____

6) What are the not so good things about being a council tenant? _____

7) What makes you feel proud about your community and neighbourhood? _____

8) What could be done to improve your community and neighbourhood? _____

Your experiences of dealing with Southampton City Council

9) Has anyone working for the Council ever caused you feelings of stigma, or made you feel uncomfortable about being a council housing tenant? Yes No

If no, then great! If yes – can you please explain what happened and how that made you feel?

10) Please rate (out of 5) your interactions with the following housing teams:

(if no experience or not applicable circle N/A)

	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Allocations						N/A
Contact Centre (Actionline)						N/A
Customer Payments and Debt Team (paying your rent)						N/A
Day to day Repair tradespersons						N/A
Estate Regeneration						N/A
Gateway						N/A
Local Housing Office staff						N/A
Major works and contractors						N/A
Neighbourhood Wardens						N/A
Supported Housing Team						N/A
Tenant Engagement Team						N/A
Welfare Rights & Money Advice						N/A

Any Other Comments

11) What advice would you give to Council staff to help them avoid causing stigma? _____

12) Do you have any other comments you would like to make about Council Housing Stigma? _____

Thank you for completing this survey! Please return it to the Tenant Engagement Team by the 6th of September 2021 in the prepaid envelope provided.

All information will be treated anonymously. To be entered in a prize draw to win one of two £20 supermarket vouchers please complete your details below:

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone number: _____ Email: _____

The legal bit: Southampton City Council, on behalf of the Tenant Inspectors, are asking you for information for the purposes of their current inspection, and to contact you if you have won the prize draw.
 We will share the statistical data from this survey within the Housing teams.
 Our Privacy Policy (<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/privacy>) explains how we handle your personal data, and we can provide a copy if you are unable to access the Internet.

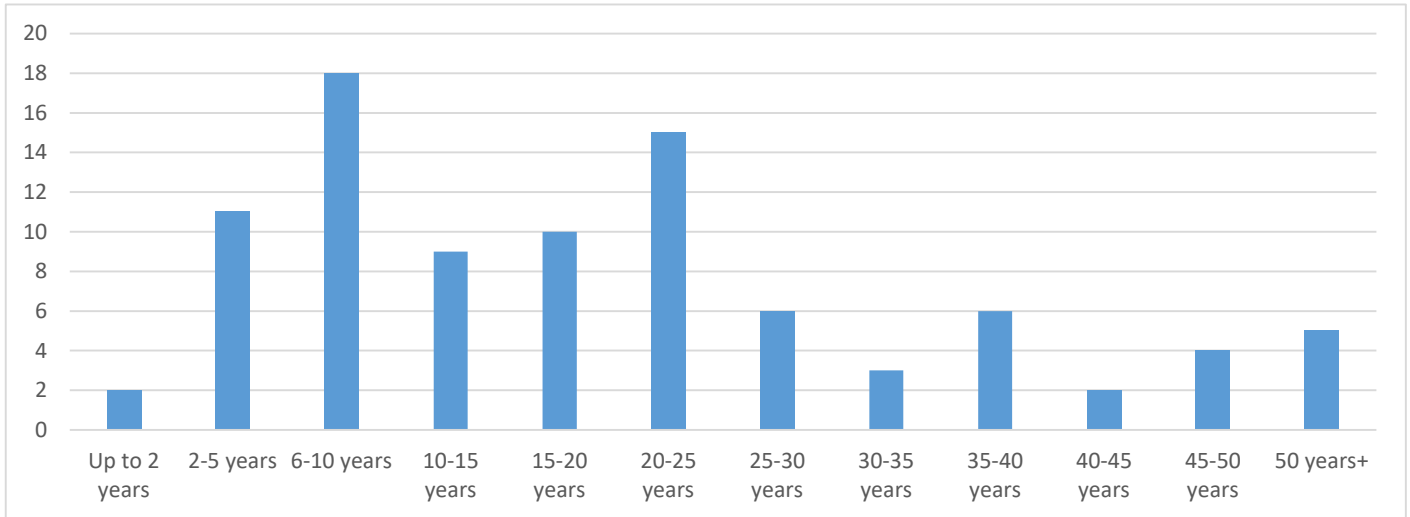
Appendix 5

Tenant Questionnaire: Stigma in Council Housing - Results

Total number of responses: 91

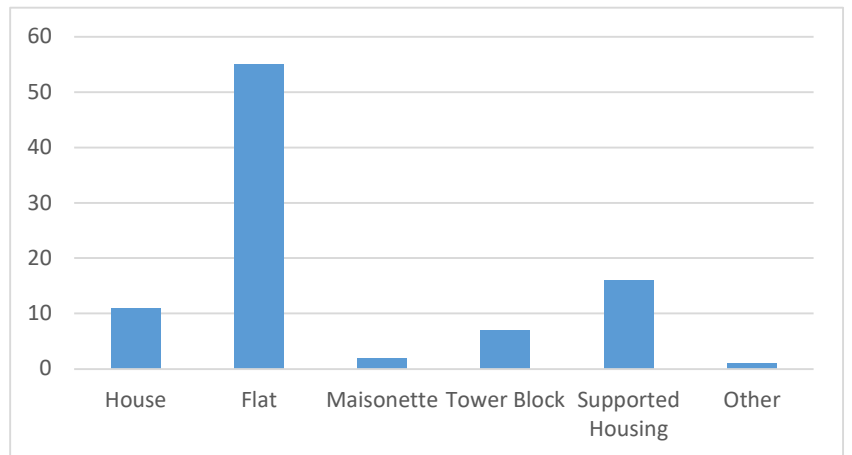
About you

1) How many years have you been a Council Tenant?



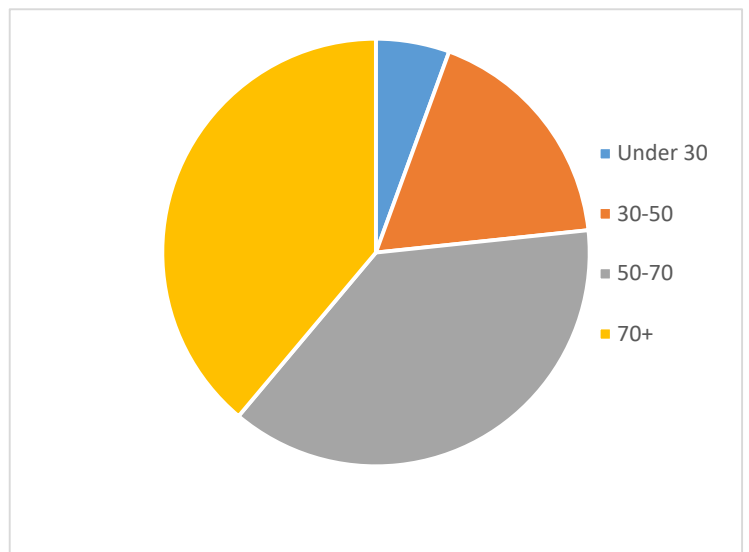
2) What type of property do you live in?

House	11	12%
Flat	55	60%
Maisonette	2	2%
Tower Block	7	8%
Supported Housing	16	17%
Other	1	1%

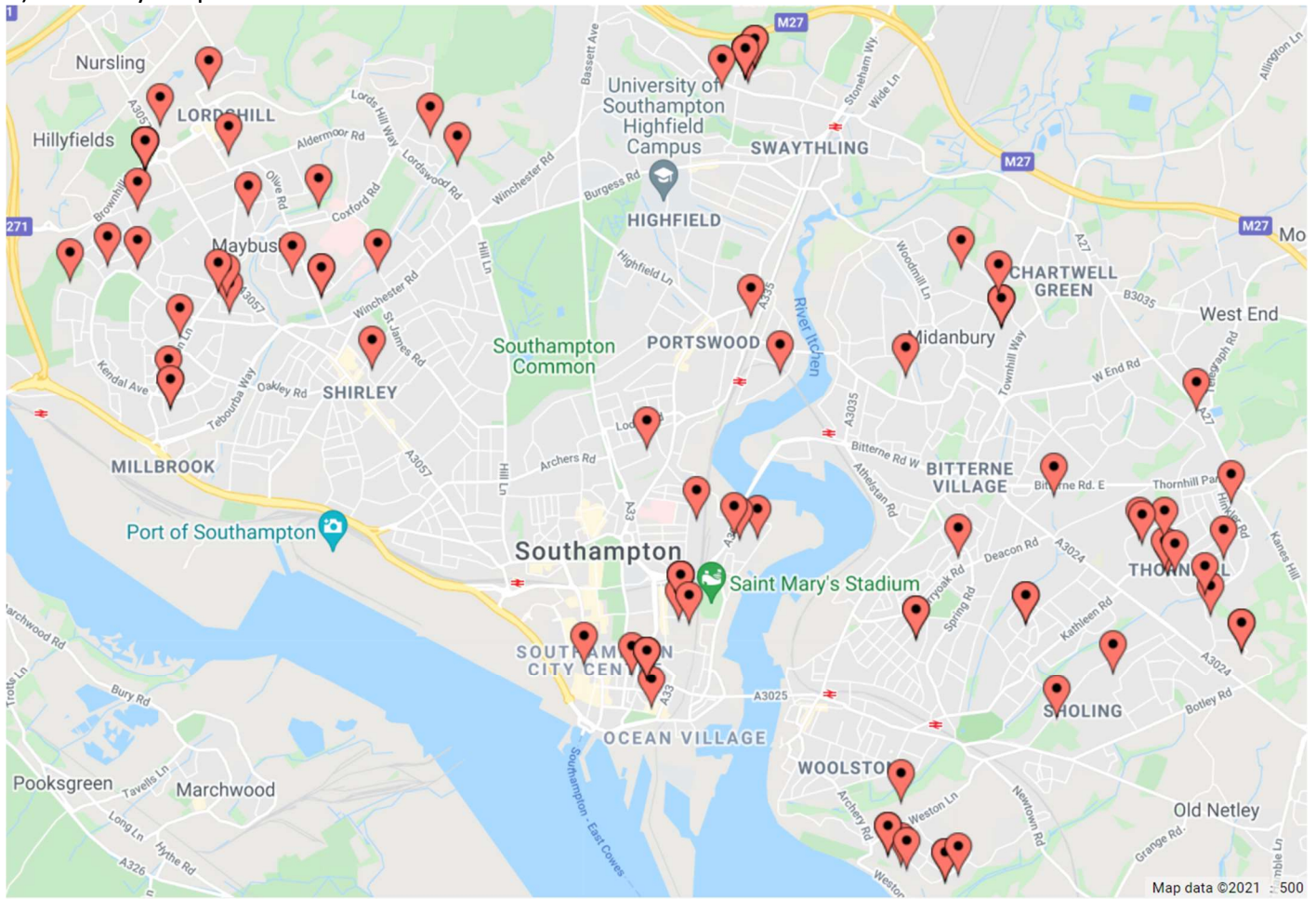


3) Please indicate which age bracket you fit into.

Under 30	5	5%
30-50	16	17%
50-70	36	39%
70+	35	38%

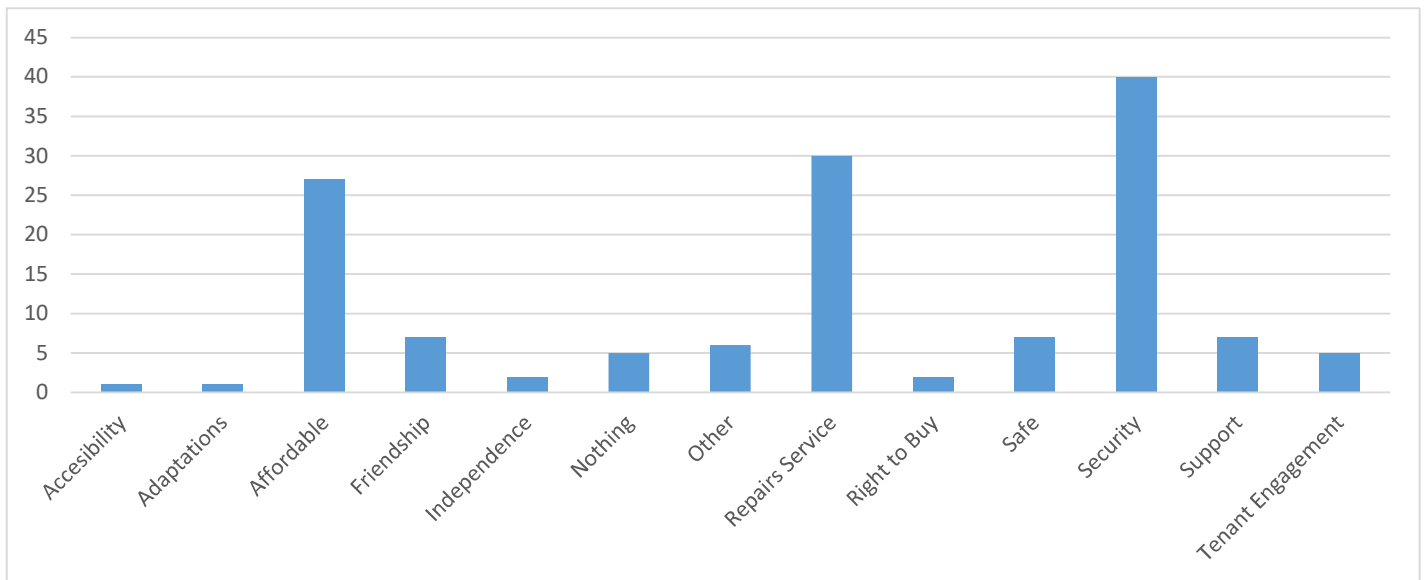


4) What is your postcode?



Your experiences of being a Southampton City Council tenant

5) What do you like about being a council tenant?



repairs being able emergency repairs
 Reasonable rent Security of tenancy
 repair promptly Secure tenancy
 housing needs tenants **repairs** good feel safe
 affordable rent
 help for repairs repairs service cheap rent Security of tenure
 council repairs social housing having a home good landlords

("What do you like about being a council tenant" comments)

Security at affordable cost.

security

Views over the water. Repairs when required get done. No cost.

Security of tenure social rent

My rent is fixed

Have some nice neighbours.

I have a roof over my head

I have a secure tenancy and don't have to worry about things like my boiler breaking down and not being able to afford a new one.

Security of tenancy.

Bringing up our daughters in a safe environment.

Maintenance regulations fair.

Also back in the 60's/70's there was good neighbour infrastructure and communication.

Security of tenure (*2)

Nothing, anymore.

We, all those who are not British (White or otherwise!), are victims of permanent racism. We are treated as foreigners (I have been in this Estate for 26 years), and I hear British tenants on this block saying: "We can't get rid of them".

Report the issue? I cannot be at war with everybody, all of the time.

Taken days off my work and council don't turn up

I would like to be a council so I maybe heard about our complaints

security of tenure, cost of housing, supported housing care

My flat meets all my needs together with neighbours who are round about my age group, and support here if I need it.

Security. Emergency repairs service is excellent.

The area I live in is physically very pleasant with green space and trees.

The way all my housing needs (repairs, plumbers, electricians, neighbourhood problems etc) can be dealt with without too many hassles or expense.

To know that social housing tends to be better cared for regarding upkeep than private landlords who charge quadruple the price. Which we currently could not afford. Affordability as well then!

Feeling Secure

as long as you pay your bill's all repairs are done for you

The security of having a home

Secure tenancy, decent housing, repair service, tenant engagement and opportunities to be part of a community

The community spirit, having someone to help if needed.

Very good value

Reasonable rent, repairs done reasonably quickly with (usually) with (usually) minimum fuss

Having a safe place to live and knowing I can stay for life

We have a good landlords who look after their tenants and you can get involved if you wish feel safe

The affordable rent and some of the benefits which this brings

Providing you behave yourself, you will always have a roof over your head and help is generally there for you if needed.

Not have the responsibility of maintaining upkeep of the building

Security of tenancy - rent not so expensive (affordable)

Access to housing when I needed it. Reasonable rent/good quality in terms of space.

Warm, clean flat, with garden for my little dog. Good next-door friends etc. New warden Sonia, met Steve Smith - good listener.

Yes

Having repairs fixed and always having a roof over your head.

Secure

Having a home

Security of having an affordable home.

It makes you feel secure and know that you get things done.

I like the safe and secure; I have no trouble with council, if I have and problems with council repairs, they will do it.

Having a place to live and cheap rent.

I feel safe.

Not worrying about most repairs

Satisfaction that I have a home and people to take care of repairs

The security of tenancy. The ability to access different departments

Affordable, secure tenancy. Knowing that repairs will be carried out when needed. That support is available if required.

On the whole I find that living worry-free, that is not having to worry about repairs and so on takes a lot of stress out of living especially at our age.

Affordable, stability, repairs, service, warden

Generally we have no problems - with one glaring exception

Security of tenancy not provided by prime landlords

Feeling safe, repairs are done, feel listened to if I phone about things - I do complain about the block cleaning at times.

SCC is a good landlord. They repair promptly and usually 1st time success. They adhere to universal policies like anti-racism, agism, sexism etc. Talk politely to tenants.

I have appreciated the training around the history of social housing, organised by the tenant engagement team. It was very informative and relevant.

Social life

The security that you won't be suddenly evicted

Secure tenancy, repairs service

Being part of a community therefore getting to know a lot of neighbours.

I enjoy these facilities: Repairs being undertaken // Mediation Service for problem neighbours // Attending two SCC conferences per annum, Walkabouts & Tenant Engagement meetings // Good liaison with Local Housing Office staff // Good Neighbourhood Warden // Tenants' Link magazine // Lovely gardens & allotment // Beautiful trees.

After many years renting privately, I greatly appreciate the security of being a council tenant - and the affordable rents.

Was ever repairs need doing they always try to give you appointment early "very helpful" also give out all was going on in the area "very good" also invite you to go on courses, I have always respect Council, very good.

Being able to buy the flat in a few years

Free gas services, and repairs. Cheap rent

Security and knowing that any problem will be dealt with.

Affordable housing

Reasonable rent payment

Getting help for repairs being able to give my kids a roof

More affordable rent

Repair are done quicker

Stability and security

Nothing

Secure tenancy, fair rent

Security

That it's mine and my children's home long term. Private renting offers no stability especially when it's a vulnerable household.

Being able to have a property that is adapted to my needs, not to worry about dealing with the very inconsistent private landlords, being able to decorate and have control over my own space.

It's affordable.

Not much, more affordable rent.

Good landlords. Excellent repairs service etc

Secure housing and one does not have a fear that suddenly the landlord may want to get you out. The ability to make the property more personal, such as decorating the walls, giving you a feeling of it is your home for as long as you want and not the awful private approach of not being allowed to hang so much as a picture on the wall if the hanging is not already present.

Security of tenancy. Knowing there are housing staff to help sort out any issues.

Rent that reflects an actual living wage.

The rent is cheaper and repairs get done quickly if needed

Right to buy

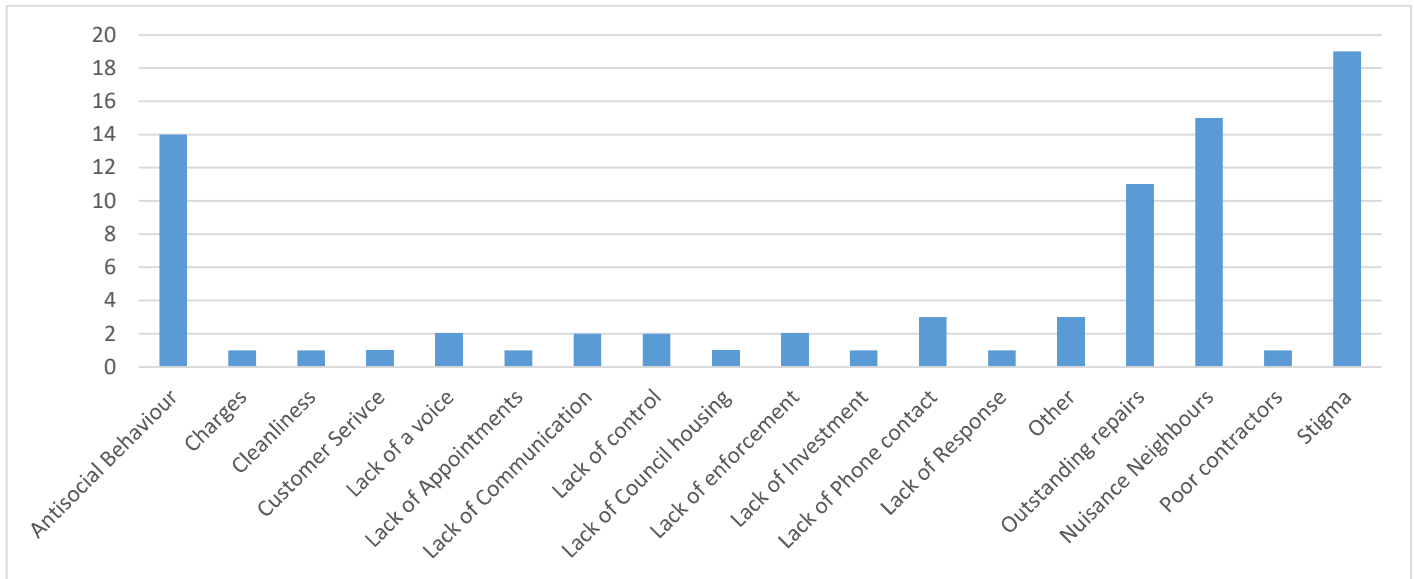
Nothing to like or dislike

Warm and safe place
 Insulation of the place

Secure tenancy, helpful housing office staff, sense of community amongst immediate neighbours, fast repairs.

Very hard to answer this

6) What are the not so good things about being a council tenant?



No garden
 trying to get things done that have been outstanding for ages
 Some neighbour nuisances/noise etc.
 Communal areas not always as clean as they should be (disrespectful people in block)
 Getting stigma from people especially my own family. being looked down upon as though I'm not supporting myself
 Noisy obnoxious neighbours. Parking across pathways causing deep muddy ruts
 Not so nice neighbours.
 Not happy going out at night
 Sometimes you can get dodgy neighbours.
 Sometimes we can be too near the wrong people for us.
 The Right to Buy.
 I am unfortunately attached to the house next

door that was bought by tenants after 5 years residency, under the Right to Buy scheme. They sold on in 2013 and the landlord has turned it into an HMO. It's an insecure site as there is fencing missing. Also there is a severely ill teenager living there and they are Eastern European, no English comprehension.
 The other houses sold under the Right to Buy in this road also have other different nationalities. Social structure of 1960's and 1970's has gone.
 We have not found any problems being a tenant, apart from the odd troublesome tenants that you meet throughout life.
 Assuming that because we live in supported housing, we are somehow seen as not being able to manage or cope.
 All improvements are carried out by unprofessional workmen, who always think that whatever poor quality work they deliver is good enough for Council tenants. There are never

Council Repairs Inspectors to check their work and see the damage before or after it has been completed, and if the Warden ever reports anything, it falls in deaf ears. On completion, it just looks shabby, and a lot is permanently damaged in the name of "necessary improvements. Improvements that are deemed to be completed in 6 months, they take 1 year. Our quality of life is compromised by prolonged work (half work weeks, hours wasted checking mobiles, hiding behind buildings, smoking, stopping every 1 or 2 hours for tea, smokes, you name it). On a different level, we have cameras that are not being used properly: persistent antisocial behaviour on the Estate, the Playground, the bin areas, in the blocks. Whatever I report can never be used despite the fact that I take photos as supporting evidence, and yet, the Council keeps asking for our help, catching people damaging Council property. I am not doing it anymore, it serves no purpose! The Council is now placing people with a history of serious behaviour problems - drug addiction, alcohol abuse, drug dealing, prostitution, theft - amongst other seriously vulnerable people, with no warning to us, whatsoever. The Council will always protect the problem people, and place the onus of asking for help on us, and the responsibility to protect on the Police. It goes on for months, our Mental Health, and general Safety and Wellbeing is damaged, just to benefit 1 tenant that doesn't care less either way!

Waiting for repair to be carry out

Not being able to get police to take seriously 7 years of harassment, including criminal damage, directed at my home by a fellow tenant. Most recently I have been brushed off with "I can advise you to visit your GP to help with the effects of the Anti-social behaviour"!*?*

If you happen to live in oldies house or flat you remain living using things was built in 50's and 1960's

attitude of some people towards council tenants, some restrictions that sometimes haven't been entirely considered

People here who do not walk their dogs and let the dogs out just by their doors and leave the mess for days before clearing up. During hot

weather I have experienced more flies and do not sit out on my balcony due to the smell of urine and dog mess.

Other tenants that care for no one but themselves and make life intolerable to decent hard-working folk. There is a stigma that we're poor or lazy. Looked down upon by ppl with mortgages.

Assumptions from some people that social housing equals 2nd class citizen

living in sheltered housing the age group being lowered because we are getting all types of people coming in now and they are very vocal Sometimes you have problems with neighbours.

Not being listened to, not being informed and broken promises

Not being able to make the neighbours who own their properties to stop antisocial behaviour, and look after their gardens.

The housing and supported housing departments failing to deal with stalkers and anti-social tenants at all leaving tenants in danger from the stalkers and anti-social tenants and deliberately ignoring and failing to follow council procedures on dealing with these issues. Trying to hold people accountable regarding these serious issues has led to me being harassed by individuals in housing and supported housing for simply expecting them to do their job (not unreasonable) and doing what I was requested to do by police (report all incidents of stalking).

Repairs not addressed in a joined up manner i.e. if a drainpipe running through flats in a stack and all have reported leaks then someone should join the dots and address the pipe as a whole nit as individual bits. Repair people not doing the work i.e. had five plumbers out to deal with a leak in neighbours flat over six-month period and only the 5th one fixed the issue which is ridiculous.

Lack of parking at blocks.

None

Personally, and being realistic, nothing in particular

can't think of anything

unable to talk with SCC staff members directly

Tend to be looked down upon

The lack of consultation when alterations are made, the attitude of council officers when you make a point about where you live and they make decisions which don't affect them because they don't live here

It is not always easy to get in touch with the council (telephones a big problem - I am not net and web capable)

Area stigma - Thornhill to some raises a few eyebrows, but where I live it's so quiet and trouble free.

Delays with repairs. Some antisocial activities by outsiders.

When the lifts break - no help. Letters that tell you off for something one tenant has done. The closure of local housing offices and staff cuts. Less sense of community. Always forced online.

People who hate dogs and complain and tell lies. This only happened in the last 2 and a half years. Caused me great stress and illness. I lived 14 years here before a complaint from anyone!

At the moment, waiting for repairs to be done.

Having to put up with other tenants smoking cannabis and selling to quite a few people who come into the Court. Been reported, but nothing ever gets done about it.

Some restrictions are unfair, and sometimes we are forced to have our homes made into what the council want (i.e. stickers regarding fire stuck on our door, unusable cupboards in the kitchen you can't get into!!)

Not experienced anything here, but when I lived with mixed ages in a tower block it was pretty rough and verbal nuisances.

Sometimes things don't get done and just get left.

None - I like it here. The Supported Housing team try. The Council workers are good. They don't treat you different.

Not owning the property, having to wait for repairs.

We have to pay for things it is not our fault.

Cheap boiler and kitchen units and double glazing.

Being tarred with the same brush, thinking I'm lazy and living on benefits

Having to everything on phone. It's long winded and difficult to access right department for complaints / suggestions. Still personally need phone for contact. When making plans for work see that it is coordinated.

Lack of continuity. Patronising attitudes of some staff.

Living in a complex of flats, there are always spats, some persons not getting on with another resident, that sort of thing.

Drug problems, domestic abuse, smell, lack of cleanliness, shouting, screaming, swearing on small kids, arguments.

Here in particular there are 47 flats (2 flats have 2 vehicles each) and there are only 18 parking bays. Less of course please from up and down the road and non-residents who park.

None I can think of

Some people like to put you down because you are a council tenant - if you had a job you should buy a home.

Not enough information for things that concern us. Difficulty getting through by telephone. Needs to know (the council) how many tenants are online. More work needs doing among tenants who abuse their (our) property.

Restrictive tenancies and indeed social stigma. My property is not on an estate, however I feel tenants on estates are viewed derogatory. Some estates were poorly planned particularly in the 1960's.

Occasional unpredictable neighbours

The upkeep of the property if you need someone to come and fix something etc, you are unable to book an appointment which is very hard if you work.

Can't point out any need of the tenant check... (couldn't read last few words)

A feeling from others of being a second-class citizen.

Sometimes other residents' laziness re: Untidy bin area // Dirty lift (urine) // Neighbours' rowing (not often) //

Spitting & throwing cigarette butts from balconies.

Any down sides to being a council tenant are usually caused by unsavoury characters coming in

to and around the flats causing upsets and problems

The only complaint I have I live in a block of flats in Queensway, there no lift and I have 23 stairs to climb and I am over 70 yrs old, so I putting in for a move, also big drug problem here.

The people who lives here and it's hard to work with them to make the place between

Stigma for being a council tenant for not working being lazy.

Not being listened to by staff when the problem is unusual. Other tenants who have no respect for where they live.

Block getting dirty

I'm a family of 7 so space is a big issue to which the council are not interested in helping at all even if they built an extra room id happily stay but they are very negative about even discussing this.

Disrespectful tenant's

Stereotypes, being stuck in inadequately spaced housing

When take too long to answer your question

Limited to what you can or can't do

Nothing

Stigma

Social stigma

Repairs are inconsistent, often half a job is deemed acceptable and they use any opportunity for work not to be done.

Sometimes takes longer than it should to get repairs done, Sometimes I feel uncomfortable sharing that I'm a council tenant as there's always assumptions made about council tenants at my age.

The lack of parking and receiving parking tickets outside.

The neighbours can leave the block in a state.

Being stuck in a property with no choice in moving. Being restricted on only having a certain number of bedrooms due to sex of children even with large age gaps, children shouldn't share once going through puberty. How they cheap out on repairs or don't repair things. The wait time. Areas and community.

People think you are bad people

The council is becoming increasingly more like a private landlord, I have noticed the increase in wording such as 'in line' with privately rented. This does not give a feeling of security. I also have a fear of the council aiming to get older people who have paid and cared for their home for years out rather than extend their stock. Not our faults the council sold off all the housing.

Nothing so far.

Because of the amount of housing needed and not enough council housing being built it can take too long to get the type of property needed for the amount of people living in the property

Customer service

You are a second-class citizen

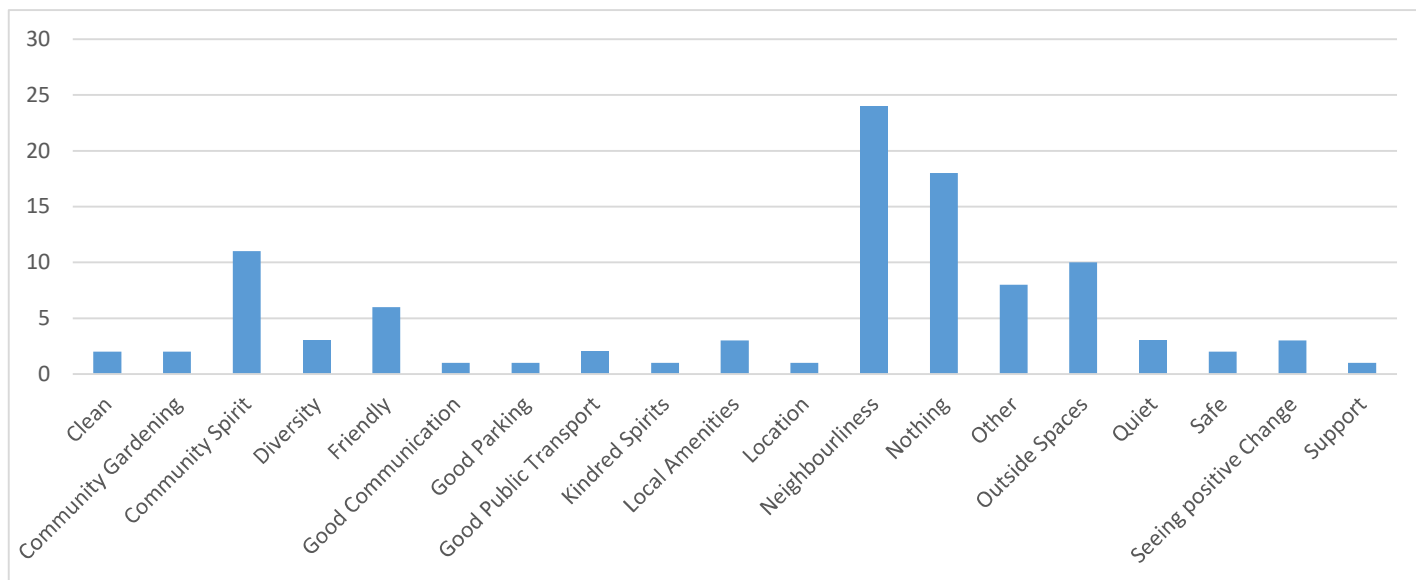
Getting things done

It takes long to get repairs done. Also, it takes long on a telephone to be directed to the right person or place.

Neighbour garden upkeep issues, Occasional anti social behaviour- these two can happen anywhere though. Stigma of social housing

Set up as easy targets to be bullied. Feel like I'm a third class citizen

7) What makes you feel proud about your community and neighbourhood?



Friendly environment for all ages & diversities.

Nothing it's a filthy area and no one cares

Wouldn't say proud but outdoor areas are good.

Parking has improved but requires monitoring (double yellow Parkings) Public transport good.

Being in the same boat together. people don't judge.

Millbrook Not exactly an area to be proud of

Not a lot. (*3)

My kids went to the local primary school, have their own families and doing ok

That we all communicate well.

Nothing now.

Trying to make the neighbourhood a better place.

Seeing the area getting better for all.

Being able to help neighbours to enjoy the accommodation provided, and to create a better environment to live in.

NOTHING! anymore.

We all mix in together

I don't feel proud I just feel normal

the green areas

One tenant here, Brian, keeps the grounds immaculate, with cutting the grass and planting beautiful flowers, it's a real treat to see all his hard work, it's beautiful here,

Most of the people in my neighbourhood, many of whom are key workers and "just get on with it".

The real sense of community which is generally lacking in posher areas.

Not a lot lately. I feel like I'm the only one around this area who cares. If I didn't report repairs, inside the block and out, help keep litter to a minimum and generally look out for the area (safety/crime) and be considerate to others it would be a pretty miserable place.

There is a large proportion who wish to ensure that residents feel safe and secure in the area.....there is a very friendly community

Being involved in community gardening projects people helping people, clean communal areas and nice flower beds and gardens

In general where I live it's pretty good except for a few that lower the tone of the neighbourhood

Good location and friendly community

There is no community and the neighbourhood has no real community to it.

We have a very active community all doing different things

The people

Some good people

The Community Spirit

I like to think I get on generally quite well with all my neighbours and I think they do with me.

The gardens of where I live are very colourful, done by Eric and Margaret of the gardening club (Fairfax Court)

Being part of it.

Nothing (*3)

Very happy to live here, no trouble, lovely neighbours, quiet.

Shirley is a good community with plenty of groups to join and retails

Kindness and neighbourliness, perseverance and dignity in face of low income/ opportunities/ crap low paid jobs. Stoicism of single parents, older people, people with disabilities. Diversity of area which is often disrespected and under-resourced.

Lovely private road with trees. Sadly no trees in Portal Road, no trees in Cunningham Crescent, so lots of CO2 due to no trees.

Actually nothing at the moment, as too much is going on. One tenant is not living in her flat, her son is living there. Nothing ever gets done about anything.

Have very nice neighbours. I keep an eye on my elderly neighbour and have helped her through all the stressful times - power cuts, water leaks, putting her food in my freezer and making cups of tea etc.

We have lovely neighbours and we have helped each other through the pandemic and NO covid victims in our block :-)

The people here are really friendly.

That people pull together and are helpful

The neighbours are good and we try to help each other.

Friendly

Very friendly

Keeping block clean and tidy from Covid-19

Green spaces

It has a lovely green space area, a play park for the kids, local shops, good bus routes and lots of genuine people

It's generally quiet and safe, although council seems to forget we are sheltered housing. People generally take care of their homes

There is no community

In general life here is somewhat sedentary, we all just rub along. There are not many who will not pass the time of day with you.

Calm and friendly places with nice outdoor space, lots of parking spaces, beautiful water view.

Very little specifically sort of friendly - "old people friendly"

Mostly quiet neighbours helping each other much enhanced by COVID-19 virus

Northam has changed over the years and I like the community and my neighbours. I have had my fall out because of noise.

When we get together to make improvements and are concerned about - rubbish, state of grass and hedges, are good neighbours.

Not much anymore, properties are in poor repair externally particularly and the details of life, eg hanging baskets from lamp posts have disappeared

Nothing I feel very isolated

Lovely gardens, allotment & trees providing colour, interest & a place to sit & chat with neighbours.

Clean & tidy areas mainly.

Good community spirit - there are 'hubs' on our estate in which residents look out for each other with shopping, prescriptions etc. during illness. Our estate's murals & focal pathway which are also lit up at night.

Good street lighting.

We hold small public events.

Nearby glass & clothes recycling banks which aids our planet.

Being a good neighbour

When needed people come together and support each other.

Unity and neighbourly good relations, unity is strength.

Shops

The people who work to mitigate the efforts of the characters mentioned above

I study as a mature student, (PhD research on working class women), so contact is limited to saying hi mostly, but it is nice that neighbours are long term and not a regular turnover, we are a community, I know all my neighbours first names. I have privately rented and was not welcomed by my neighbours who owned their homes. That was a bigger stigma, they already had preconceptions as I was a single parent with two children, (now grown). They felt somehow superior, not sure why money makes people behave that way. The need to feel higher than another is quite sad.

I don't feel proud right now as sheds get broken into, back gate lock always broke, down and out use sheds area as toilets and drug dealer do their deal here, but I am proud of Council.

Look out for each other

Nothing. Don't feel involved

multicultural

We can come together in times of need

It looked after

Neighbourhood feel. Knowing my neighbours

My neighbours

A majority of my neighbours are council tenants and we have a strong sense of community in our road. We care and we look out for each other.

How people banded together during covid to support the vulnerable, even those who traditionally don't get much support.

As of today not a lot there is so much crime about it makes it hard these days

Friendly, people in my road look after their homes.

Our block of flats are quite quiet

I don't know

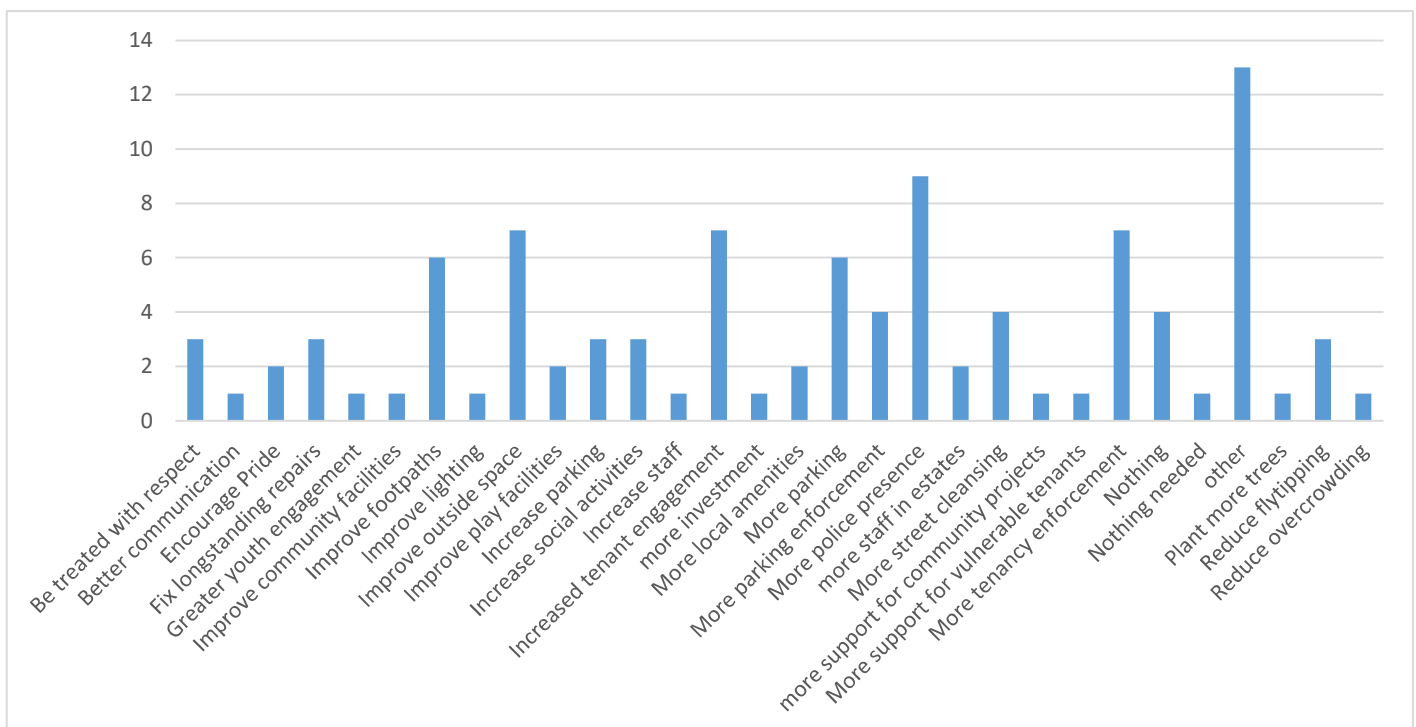
I am a block rep which I enjoy maintaining the grounds for all tenants.

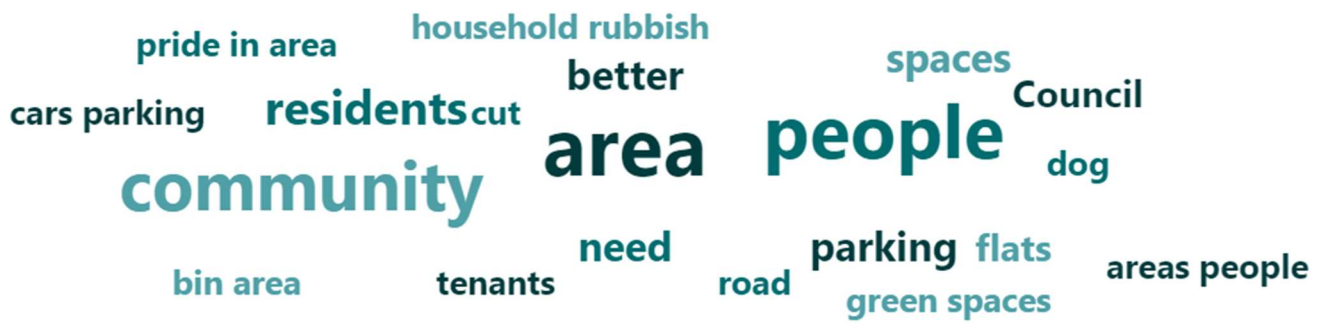
They are most friendly and very helpful

I feel proud of my little house but not so much the neighbourhood

None

8) What could be done to improve your community and neighbourhood?





More interaction with kids about what THEY want, not what the Council THINK they want.

More assistance from the council to improve our environment and well-being by supporting community projects.

not much with the community or the neighbourhood being we are in the middle of private houses and mostly students and shared houses all around

Be more inclusive.

Respectable tenants. Don't overcrowd flats with children. Shame to say folk cannot be bothered to join in on community issues.

Waste paper pick up. dustmen doing their job properly and green spaces being kept up together. More dog bins

Teach people to take some pride in area, consider others.

This is a very long road with 106 houses half having been sold. Social cohesion has disappeared. More litter is appearing and residents from overseas seem to think they can put household rubbish/shopping trolleys/furniture on the pavement and it gets left there. This is up and down the road. We do have powered wheelchair users trying to use the pavements but often go out in the road.

First of all, when we contact the Council, to report an issue, it would be polite if we were not to be treated with disdain, dismissed, patronized. It would be nice to be answered and listened to properly; it would be nice to feel that our reports are acted upon, and to have a feed back! I even have to call to get feedback, mostly to be told I cannot have one, (because the perpetrator's rights prevail over the victim's).

Stopping the motor bikes from racing up and down.

I don't wish to complain about neighbours but if the support workers could do a walk around of people's outside space and comment to the certain person about the dog mess attracting flies and not clearing it up straight away. And also the people still persisting in throwing out lots of bread for pigeons resulting in these birds perching on my balcony waiting to be fed and creating a messy balcony floor and also the ironwork.

To have the works carry out

Follow up on the consequences. Parking infringements. ie, Saints Pub, Wimpson Lane, Kendal Ave

A more engaged community centre
more communal activities

STOP TRIVIALISING CRIMINAL HARRASSMENT AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR. Much "ASB" is actually criminal, but by giving it this label it can be dismissed as something that people in Council estates should expect to have to live with. I cannot conceive of friends in posher areas being treated in the same way I have been.

Stop transport businesses using our carpark as a business premises. They park up to 3 large white vans which are used as removal vans?? Attend "staff meetings" in our carpark at night and early morning. There are no spaces for residents because of this. Large motor parts are often dumped in the bin area from these ppl. The owner of the vans doesn't live in any of these flats or adjacent houses either. Drives to "work" and leaves his car here all hours. The dustbin men struggle to get their vehicles in here because of these large vans.

Target fly tippers dumping business waste in our bin areas.

Install decent intercoms so we can actually see who is at the door.

Need more room for car park good garden

Due to lockdown, Police "visibility" has decreased.....more community presentations/events could be reintroduced

Not sure on this one

No alcohol consumption in communal areas, no drugs, more parking and no unregistered long term residents

Get more involved in community and prove the value you receive by getting involved. Being proud of your surrounding area makes more of yourself and also your home and open spaces. Love the ground and it will love you back by producing flowers and fruit and veg and also improves wild lives and stops animals and insects from dying off. We need bees to survive.

Stop people from using the foot paths as a cut through, and as a private driveway and as a parking space, making it difficult use the paths. Stop the parking on green spaces, making it into a mud pond.

Keeping the streets clean

Clean up the rubbish more frequently, councillors to come round more often than they do to address and resolve issues

Better footpaths ours are very uneven

More money put into upgrading roads and pavements

Keep doing what you are doing

An active Community Forum, not lead or dictated by a few as with the residents associations

More consultation on anything that directly affects residents in the area & more decision making from the tenants & leaseholders about their surrounding area when plans are made

A bit of give and take! Also the paving slabs around community hall would be better if tarmacked as they are very old.

To improve footpaths by cutting hedges more frequently, improve security to tackle antisocial behaviour (youths riding motorbikes at high speed around this area)

Firework ban. There are so many drugs I am deeply embarrassed to live here.

Treat us like adults and not problems. Enabling grassroots actions. Stop closing down amenities.

Stop racial profiling of our kids. Decent jobs and opportunities for young people.

Everything

All okay.

Plant trees, move people who hate dogs, cats, animals. Don't listen to liars.

A lot needs to be done. Fencing needs repair, grass and hedges need to be cut more often, a piece of ground needs to be seen to. The cleaners need to do their job properly.

All the fly tipping. Bring down the charge to take things away.

I cannot see anything wrong with it

Dog walkers are the only bad thing as they let dogs poo on the grass and do not pick it up. They shout at their dogs from 6am onwards and stand and gossip with each other outside the bedrooms of all lower floor flats. The other thing is motor bike riders here.

More seating areas for those without gardens to enjoy the warmer weather.

Grass get cut and household rubbish taken away i.e. rubbish on road taken and fridge freezers taken that had been dumped by flat doors.

The pathways, and as I am 70, someone who would put up a shelf for me, like neighbourhood wardens.

Crime rates are quite high here

Grass and bushes cut. The Warden to be in the neighbourhood if we have a problem or need something done or just to answer questions.

Cooperation and social activities.

Littering - people who drop litter.

Sorting the problems out with parking, maybe by concreting the messed-up verges and disgusting pavements

Dustbins washed out on a regular basis. Give us the keys to lock gates again. Have wardens in person once a month. We are in sheltered housing but personally feel forgotten.

Creating of a sense of community

Local church instead of mosques and temples. Feel a lot like an outsider in my own country.

The biggest problem is a total lack of parking. It is this, and nowhere to charge an electric car that

were the straw that broke the camel's back, and induced us to give up our car. Ronnie and I have been campaigning for the best part of 15 years for better parking, that and a way of stopping non-residents from parking.

Help for addicts. Help for people in abusive relationship. Support for children whose parent are verbally abusive and not coping with daily stress.

In March we reported the fence to the front of the flats has been broken for 7/8 years. In May we were told the materials had been ordered.

I think more should be done for the park for the children.

Nothing

Listening to tenants. Encourage pride in sites. Be more sympathetic to tenants who's health has suffered when abused by aggressive neighbour.

Community centres with activities for all age groups, however emphasis on youth support unconditionally.

More police beats

Better community projects, particularly for kids/teens

More staff to deal with queries, issues and complaints

To have contacts among neighbours and discuss the shortcomings and needs to bring to councils attention.

Financial penalties for residents' actions re spitting & throwing cigarette butts from balconies, but I don't know if this could be enforced with evidence only given from neighbours. CCTV footage for proof would be too expensive.

To replace all shed door as they are rotten, sort out the drug dealer and back gate mended, put camera in as down and out get in front door as trade button go on too early.

Check people before they move into blocks of flats etc

Bin areas people not caring

Getting tenants involved. Maybe a block group.

Need a co op

More cleaning around the area

Better crime prevention better park facilities and lighting

Get rid of known troublemakers

Flower to be looked after an act on the motorbikes

Not to put drug addicts in the same blocks as children

Less anti-social behaviour

Get rid of the alcoholic's that sit outside local shop.

The green area out the front is a shambles. Holes, missing posts, looks really ugly.

It often feels a little run down and like there's not that much pride in the area.

More parking to be available.

Better communication between council and tenants and wardens

Kids on bikes are a bit of a pain but it's not too bad.

Some maintenance takes a while

The bin men paying attention to rubbish that may have dropped out the bins and picking it up behind them instead of leaving it in the back alley. (I picked it up yesterday). More trees, less toxic weedkiller use around our homes without us having a choice. Cleaning directly out the back of our block, I do it sometimes, despite a service charge for outside, it is never done. Allocated Parking so we each have a parking bay! It's a friction between tenants when one flat will park a couple of cars and another has no space. We have a regular 'bad' parker who will park across the divide, so it's one flat taking up 3 spaces! Even worse is when people who do not live in the flats take the parking then wander off down the road to their houses where they already have a car parked in the driveway. Better cycle paths for locals to use and interconnect with our needs, (shops, other areas), not just for commuters to the train station. It's a shame the gardens for flats were made into one so only the ground floor flats got really large gardens that are not always well looked after.

Encouraging residents to be involved in how the neighbourhood looks might improve how people feel about the area - eg through gardened spaces

I don't think anything needs to improve

A lot

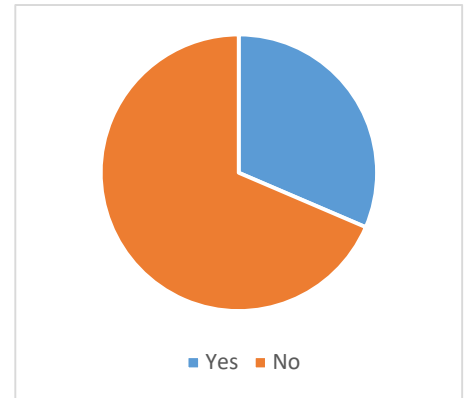
Getting service done quickly

Your experiences of dealing with Southampton City Council

9) Has anyone working for the Council ever caused you feelings of stigma, or made you feel uncomfortable about being a council housing tenant?

Yes 29 (32%)

No 63 (68%)



If yes – can you please explain what happened and how that made you feel?

When pointing out that they should have made appointment to come to my home instead of just turning up "on speck" expecting to gain access.....their response was that it was the Council's property and as such they can demand entry whenever they like

It was during a Housing Estate Residents and Tenants Association. I put my hand up, to ask a question, and the Chair, looked at the Housing Officer next to her, and she said in a tone loud enough for me to hear across the room: "What the hell does she want now?" And the Housing Officer laughed!

I felt that more, a lot more, is to be expected from Civil Servants, at least in public, and when they are representing the Local Government (even if they share some more questionable peoples' attitudes.

I asked about my door that needs to be replaced but I was told we don't replace only broken generally good but sometimes staff & contractors forget they are effectively in your back garden, outside your home

A warden wasn't polite when I reported a problem and banged my door incredibly hard and barked at me instead of just talking. Saying he takes no nonsense. Whatever that meant. I'd reported an outside leak. I felt annoyed because I'm trying to help. He made me feel like I was a nuisance and just adding to his workload

I have been made to feel unwelcome in my flat and neighbourhood.

Ignoring my emails, being dismissive of concerns

Apparently council tenants aren't supposed to file complaints about poor or non-existent service or hold employees to account for their failings. We're just supposed to put up with whatever happens or however we are treated such as being lied to by council staff about sprinkler installations and not make a fuss and we get penalised if we do. Especially women tenants. Male tenants complain about something - it gets addressed quickly. Women complain about same issue and get ignored. We've even tried experiments here where a male tenant will make a complaint and a woman will make the same complaint and results bear out the conclusion that female tenants get treated differently and more poorly than male tenants

A site foreman was always extremely rude but he got better with time

Every time I deal with the council my opinions are completely ignored regardless of the logic applied all the council officers will do is follow their policy again regardless if it is right or wrong, and they all seem to forget who pays their wage, and unlike private businesses they have no commotion so "that will do " attitude is rampant throughout the whole council

I think it's more about the cheapening of the system. Closing offices, losing staff, dealing with Gateway, being forced online, dreadful state of stairways, lifts and paving. Feeling we don't matter.

The Warden Julie upset many tenants in my block.

Wasn't believed about some scaffolding being put up and left there for 4 months.

Attempt to make me feel inferior by some staff clearly untrained in customer care. Probably related to health/age then tenancy status.

The local housing officer, and some of the wardens seem to be ignoring us.

When I first became a tenant, council worker introducing me - shouted and talked as though I was simple. I complained and it was immediately put right.

When my kitchen and bathroom were being refitted I felt I was left with limited autonomy and since the work done, more substandard work has been discovered

When we were trying to become council tenants an advisor said you can't just have what you want because we needed a ground floor property at the time.

A letter that was quite patronising. Made me feel that I was seen as stupid and incapable

I was reporting a problem with our Heating unit. (which is different). They told me I was not calling the correct people and I should call our energy provider which was written on the payment card. In a tone that made me feel 2 inches tall or stupid. When our energy provider for our heating is SCC.

A repair man came over about the windows and these are very old in a bad state but made us feel responsible for the age and disrepair but they all need changing so I thought that was unfair

Single mum of 3 children (one is a baby), made me take down a rubbish bag to the bin area from outside of my front door. 3 flights of stairs while holding heavy rubbish bag and my baby. Said he would fine me if I didn't.

The warden over my centre

My son is disabled and I often have to explain his disability to staff. Once they know it's fine, but legally you aren't actually allowed to ask what his disability is. He has high medical and care needs, we are a vulnerable household. Why is that information not kept in file for when I call.

When originally trying to get housed, I sometimes felt that I was being judged for needing a council house because I couldn't find anything suitable in the private sector. It wasn't so much a single event as a series of events.

When I was struggling to maintain my tenancy due to a lack of social care, I was frequently made to feel like my position as a council tenant was used as "ammunition" to make me look after the property better, almost to "motivate" me to be able to do tasks I'd been assessed as needing support for and was clearly struggling with - I was made to feel like I was just being lazy and was essentially threatened with homelessness as motivation.

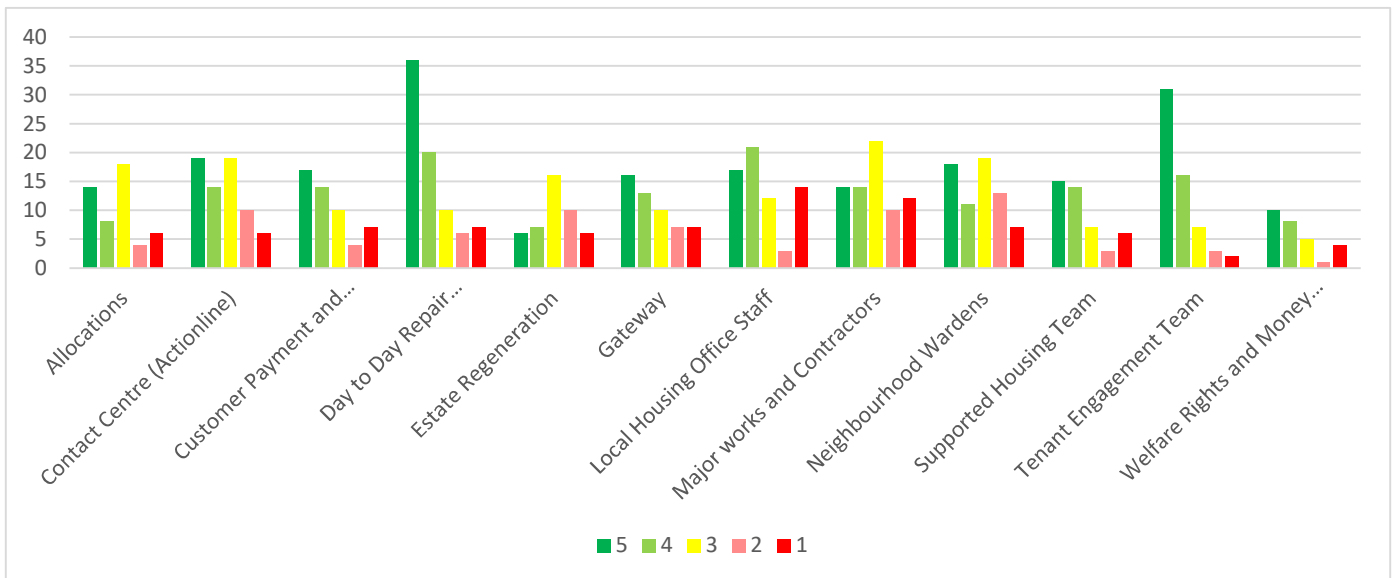
A housing inspector. He walked in as if it was his personal property and marched straight through to the bedroom which is damp and made it seem like it was all my fault, when actually it is not. He was going on about hanging washing on heaters... I do not, I have a tumble dryer on the balcony. I live with damp now rather than have another like him marching through my flat, which btw I take my shoes off in. He was not courteous at all, I felt very uncomfortable.

When I rang and asked for advice about being in a top floor flat with no lift with two children and one on the way they told me this is why I shouldn't have children so close together

If you are an old woman with a foreign accent you are intimidated, spoken to in a rude manner, treated like non existing by council contractors.

A repair was being carried out and the guy was talking to someone in the office and without realising the phone was passed on. He said 'you should have just patched it up'. He had a shock when I asked him why was that. Also hearing trades talking about future repairs to council homes and employees recommending to charge tenants for repairs for profit to the council

10) Please rate (out of 5 5=very good, 1 = very poor) your interactions with the following housing teams:



Area of Service	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	Average score	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Allocations	14	8	18	4	6	35	3.40	44%	36%	20%
Contact Centre (Actionline)	19	14	19	10	6	19	3.44	49%	28%	24%
Customer Payment and Debt Team	17	14	10	4	7	32	3.58	60%	19%	21%
Day to Day Repair Tradespeople	36	20	10	6	7	3	3.91	71%	13%	16%
Estate Regeneration	6	7	16	10	6	35	2.93	29%	36%	36%
Gateway	16	13	10	7	7	31	3.45	55%	19%	26%
Local Housing Office Staff	17	21	12	3	14	17	3.36	57%	18%	25%
Major works and Contractors	14	14	22	10	12	13	3.11	39%	31%	31%
Neighbourhood Wardens	18	11	19	13	7	15	3.29	43%	28%	29%
Supported Housing Team	15	14	7	3	6	37	3.64	64%	16%	20%
Tenant Engagement Team	31	16	7	3	2	26	4.20	80%	12%	8%
Welfare Rights and Money Advice	10	8	5	1	4	54	3.68	64%	18%	18%

Any Other Comments

11) What advice would you give to Council staff to help them avoid causing stigma?

meetings with tenants
 talk to tenants
 position as tenants
 Council property
 sort of people
 different
 flats
 people
 quality people
 peoples homes
 people who aren't bullies
 tenants property
 stigma
 council tenants
 leaseholder or tenant
 bad tenants
 themselves in the tenants
 great tenants
 lots of tenants

Stop making all Estates look like they're made from a concrete template.

Polite non-judgemental. There are great tenants and very bad tenants. One should judge everyone with the same brush

Speak to people as you would talk to yourself. not down to them

Have ALL the information regarding the property (tenants property) at hand to be able to save the obvious questions from being asked every time.

Just treat us as human beings

Be mindful of how they treat people.

Listen to the tenant and don't prejudge. Lots of tenants have family/financial/health/ (including mental health) problems.

To visit and engage with council tenants to understand their problems, and consult them re their circumstances to get a better understanding.

Most of you may be one pay-check away from needing a Council property. Remember that you, too, would like to live in a safe, peaceful environment, and be treated with respect.

Should inspect houses once a year or twice remember that these are our homes... even though rented from the council

We are all human regardless of colour, race and people should be treated as you would wish to be treated.

It is not the Council-employed staff who generally cause the stigma. I have had issues in the past with two "bad apples" in Housing but generally they are very good and conscientious.

Contractors are another matter altogether. When I reported unsafe contractor working practices 3 years ago the Contractor's "Health and Safety" manager as good as called me a liar because he clearly expected to get away with it.

Because I live in a studio flat, it doesn't make me a lesser person than anyone else. I was homeless due to marriage break down and I'm not in this situation out of choice. Please don't tar with the same brush. Make the areas look less 'council'. I think housing needs an overhaul and refresh. It's tired looking and so am I lol.

Publish figures in "public domain" confirming the very small percentage of Council Tenants that are actually unemployed, contrary to common belief.....Publish in "public domain" all the "good/achievements" made within local communities

When answering a council tenant please be careful on your wording

By making them tenants feel valued.

We are all equal

They are doing ok so far never felt any stigma.

As a Council employee myself, I know there are regular courses and training to improve customer relations

Treat people as individuals, listen to what they are saying and act on it, do your jobs properly the first time so there is no need to file a complaint, educate yourself about council policies and procedures and follow them, hire better quality people who aren't bullies or incompetent, hold regular meetings with tenants to raise and deal with issues.

Be polite and helpful

Politeness is important and really listening to what the tenant is saying

Talk to tenants

We are all equal In reality

Remember these people pay for the right to live here which indirectly pays their wages, understand that policies set in concrete will not work in every case & each person is different, put themselves in the tenants position would they want to be ignored and told this is going to happen whatever you decide or want, these are people's homes regardless if leaseholder or tenant

I have come to experience that all walks of life live in council property, but the stigma still sticks that somehow we are second class citizens, but that's society thinking.

To be more aware and be more sensible regarding people's sensitivities.

Since Capita took over it's less about stigma and more about feeling they don't give a shit. We are just 'units' not people.

Do not take sides, look at my residency record first before acting on a complaint.

For the Local Housing Office to phone and check up with other departments.

Regarding anti-social behaviour, some staff are extremely biased and do not take complaints seriously and have been very rude.

Be more polite

Try to make them understand people don't always get the opportunity to get their own home.

For wardens to look properly and to get stuff removed that makes the flats look bad.

The staff are good, they do try

Listen to the tenants and act on what they say straight away. Make sure wardens are available in all areas.

We have a neighbour whose kids litter all the time round block of flats, every day it's the same.

The sort of people who cause stigma have to live somewhere. But few here seem to respect the law. Not surprising there is stigma.

Treat us all as individuals and deal with the problems as felt necessary. Remember we are the customer

Personally I'm not bothered how other people feel, they don't pay my rent. I know I'm lucky to be here with no problem families close by.

Customer Care training

I suggest that they try and answer emails and return phone calls, that there could be a bit less bureaucracy.

I personally have not experienced it. Everyone's circumstances are different and each should be looked as an individual cases.

I have had to give up my car to avoid strife over parking. And I have requested advice on where I can park my electric over night. Nobody has bothered to reply.

Develop a thick skin.

Never talk down to someone.

Remember who pays their wage. Most are paying own way - not all on state aid * and this should not be a stigma

To be aware of their own introjected values and keep professional boundaries

Remain to be multi-racial and sensitive to different needs

Not to treat people as they don't have a job etc because they are a council tenant.

Never make assumptions about a person based on where they are housed.

Tenants have different motives and qualities. To tell the wardens of the flat.

Converse with residents & leaseholders as if they were your own neighbours.

Remember that they are entitled to respect, regardless of where they live.

Don't prejudge people - although this ought to apply to society as a whole

Some people are hardworking and makes pride in their homes wherever they live

To listen and not assume they know everything.

We have no problems they treat use with respect

Face to face visits chatting to people getting their ideas would feel more like they care

Be more understanding of different situations

Make the flats look nicer on the outside

Remember we are the reason you have a job.

Treat everyone as equal

Remember that younger council tenants exist and aren't just milking off the system, that our position as tenants shouldn't be used as leverage when they feel that we're not meeting "their" standards.

Some of us are clean and tidy and look after where we live.

Attitude and understanding

Communication

We are people too. Respect is not a given, treat us as you would like to be treated.

I just think they need to be kinder and look at everyone's situation individually

Patience and politeness

They must be kind

I've always been treated with customer respect.

Avoid conscious bias

12) Do you have any other comments you would like to make about Council Housing Stigma?

council unwilling
 council car private
 Council estates feel stigma work
 wall between the Council
 live council tenants council houses
 Council Staff help council housing people social housing
 council response council workers council contractors
 council employees

It should be more advertised that council tenants are people too. I have family members who won't visit me I have to go to restaurants to meet them! Or they will stay at hotels and not my house

The council state a variety of messages in their tenants agreement yet when it comes to council car parking all they do is write little letters with absolutely no follow-up consequences.

Give us all the support you can

Don't think so

It would be nice to be able to have some officer in place who can come out to tenants and help them.

By definition it's not the Council that can do anything. The stigma is in the Private bracket.

As above

To help tenants/ leaseholders to realise their potentials thereby lifting their standing in the community.

We can change attitudes. Start with Council Staff, Contractors and all workmen. Supervise and check their work. Ensure they carry out their work with Respect and treat us with dignity. Stop making us a feel that there is this huge wall between the Council and us, tenants. Stop criminalizing us all.

No comments as I don't much talk with them

There is a lot of misconceptions with respect to people living in social housing & it is very difficult getting across the message that we should not all be tarred with the same brush.....there is good and bad wherever you go.....unfortunately the wrong impressions will still continue, despite any initiatives made to the contrary

Specifically recently the entirely random decision regarding video doorbells - not logical, or well

explained - they are not illegal for private homeowners to use.

It exists widely in society at large. I am a Civil Engineering professional and several of my colleagues refer to "people who live on Council estates" in a derogatory manner. I always put them right, but it is very frustrating to be considered the dregs of society because your only chance of decent housing was Council housing. I think it's similar for people claiming benefits, a significant proportion of whom are in badly paid work.

Stigma has always been around. It's the snobbery of owning their homes, and thinking they can do as they feel, in spite of the law. This contributes to stigma, one rule for one and one for the others. The council unwilling to prosecute law breakers, and anti-social behaviour.

I don't think the stigma will ever go no matter what is done. There's ppl who are lucky enough not to become homeless and I don't think they know enough about it to have fair opinions. It's a class thing that will never stop. Sadly there are still people who bend the system to meet their needs to gain that extra bedroom/bigger home/garden etc (I have zero bedrooms, but I'm thankful for what I do have) It's happened for decades and it will continue.

I would like to see more use of the CCTV cameras that are supposed to keep up safe, but the staff say they are not allowed to access our complaints. They (the SH team) are supposed to be here for us!

In general everything is ok but sometimes repairs take a while to get sorted

People on low incomes struggle day to day and do not always ask for help as they feel ashamed. Being on a low income does not mean you are unvalued. I feel financially embarrassed on a

regular basis but accept and try to live within my means. I have got help but my mental health issues cause me to spend money on impulse and have gone hungry on many occasions both in work and out of work.

I think it's never going away

Those that feel stigmatised can always move to the private sector

Not experienced council housing stigma except from council employees and council contractors who frankly should know better.

I have always been treated fairly

Mainly comes from those who have private housing and a secure financial status

Councillors are elected so have to consider the people who vote for them even if it's only every 2 years, but the council workers seem to think they are untouchable because there is no competition against which they can be graded as already stated private business treats their customer correctly or they go bust

The ability to talk to staff quicker.

Society can only change stigma - that we are all open to change in our lives through no fault of our own, and we need a roof over our heads!

I think the problem starts at national government. Not underfunding, but we have over decades been disrespected more and more. Council Housing isn't valued, so tenants aren't either.

Put gates that closes auto and leave dogs alone.

I find it is difficult to get any reply to getting in touch with any work repairs done, I have had a blocked sink for 4 days.

Could make sure that work of contractors completed quicker. Make them accountable for breaking tenants' stuff and leaving equipment in the garden.

I am registered blind and need/rely on help.

More police patrols.

But most of us are hardworking and don't do drugs and are not unmarried mothers or any of the archetypes.

If a block looks shabby/neglected it needs to get council response and start speaking to tenants re plan to improvements.

Some other thoughts re stigma: Public perception

of council tenants:

1) all criminals and nerdowells. (Criminals live in all kinds of housing)

2) Council tenants live off the state.

*I live off the state with my pension

*Many who live in private property are on benefits (as do the Royals)

*Media portrays police always outside Council estates. etc drugs, vandalism

3) Large numbers of the poorest live in council housing. Not accurate these days.

* But many of our blocks have rags for curtains, junk on balcony, no flowers or colour anywhere.

Could we change name from council housing / social housing ---- or something else.

It can create lifelong feelings of inferiority and escalates the class social divide

I was not aware of any stigma positive or negative.

Again, allocations for appointments etc are all within the working day, changes to that would help.

Council houses and other properties are so obvious, they all look the same. They stand out like a sore thumb.

Brilliantly simple survey.

Where I park and pay you to park there I think it wrong, a young guy about 25 years got a ground floor flat, nothing wrong with him, that very bad.

Be more involved with the tenants

Yes help we feel very much forgotten in our house and need help asap

Just that stigma can take various forms and is more complicated than just being made to feel bad for being a tenant at all.

There is a sense that (not from SCC staff) you have somehow have failed because you have a council property and that you are 'taking' from people who 'really' deserve it.

I feel none really, is poverty a stigma now then?

This is the first time I have heard the term. When 'Mr I will march straight through your home' came in, I did not feel like a lesser person just angry that this person felt in his right to behave as he did, but I put that down to him being a middle aged man with a little power trying to

make himself feel more important. His problem not mine really.

When we do ask questions we don't get given the truth.

It exists and overlays with diversity and therefore can be misunderstood

Sort out parking - paying for the privilege the same as the tower blocks

I feel that the main stigma comes from non-residents, possibly jealous of the fact that our tenancy is secure, and in general we do not worry

about deterioration of the property, and reduction in property value.

It's more about other factors - school, clubs, finance etc. The disincentive to access allocated housing causes negative view with public.

I found being a single mother that you aren't properly represented and definitely be discriminated. I will never get over how I was treated and bullied by those at the local housing office

Additional materials from tenants

These photos were sent in response to this survey with the following message

Add this is your list of reason council tents are thought of as crap.

Cat shit drinks bottles and today tissues.
Where the Cleaning crews?



Here is a letter that was sent in response to the survey and the receiver felt the letter was very patronising and stigmatising

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

Supported Housing

Manston Court, Lordshill Centre East,
Southampton,
SO16 8HF



Direct Dial: (023) 8083 2473
Text Relay: Dial 18001 before full telephone number

Please ask for: Trudy Stallard
Our Ref: TS/Leaside

Dear Resident(s)

RE: New Front Door

As you know, you have recently had new Front Doors fitted at Leaside Way. As standard practice, Southampton City Council do not usually 'additional' door furniture such as safety door chains.

It has been brought to our attention though, that some residents have enquired about having a door chain fitted. Although door chains can reduce anxiety to the resident, feeling it is a security measure, it can be counter productive to the security of your property, which is one of the reasons we do not routinely add these to specifications when replacing front doors.

The new doors that have been fitted, are in line with current regulations and have one of the best, security locking systems in place. The best way to keep your property secure, is to keep the door shut and locked. If you are unsure who is at your door, a spyhole has been fitted so that you do not have to open your door at all, and you can see who is at your door, before opening it. As soon as you open your door, even if on a door chain, you reduce the risk of someone accessing your property unlawfully, significantly.

However, we fully appreciate that some of you may still prefer a door chain fitted. As an exception for Leaside Way, we are willing to fit a door chain, should you request one. Also, if you require your spyhole lowered, then please contact the number below as soon as possible, as this will be for a limited timescale.

May I stress again, that the best security measure is always to keep your door locked. If you do want a door chain, please may I ask that you only put the chain across when answering the door and that you do not leave it on, at any other times. One reason for this, is that if you were to activate your emergency pull cord for assistance, we would endeavour to get hold of keyholders but ultimately may have to send a joiner to complete a forced entry. If a door chain is on, then this may hinder any urgent assistance you may require.

If you require a safety door chain or your spyhole lowered, please contact the property help desk on 023 8083 3010 or email PropertyDivision.housing@southampton.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,