



Southway Housing Trust

Tenants' Handbook

March 2010

Your home,  safe in our hands

Tenant
approved



To view updates of sections in this handbook please go to our website at
www.southwayhousing.co.uk



Dear Tenant,

Welcome to Southway Housing Trust!

We're a not-for-profit organisation, responsible for the ownership, maintenance and improvement of nearly 6,000 homes in South Manchester.

It is my pleasure to send you this Tenants' Handbook, which I hope you will find useful and informative.

The information in this handbook should help you to know what to expect from us and where to go if you have an enquiry or wish to ask for one of the services we offer.

We're always keen to hear from our customers about how we're doing. You can help us with this by telling us when we do things well, and when you think we could do better. To let us know, just check out the different ways you can supply feedback by going to page 60.

We're spending £107 million, improving every Southway home inside and out. See www.southwayhousing.co.uk for more information.

We promise to work with you, and our partners, to make South Manchester a place that people are proud of – a safe place where people choose to live, work and play.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Mitchell
Chief Executive

Finding your way around this handbook

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1 Our vision and objectives

Our vision

We will work in partnership with others to make South Manchester a place that people are proud of -- a safe place where people choose to live, work and play.

We will:

- Be warm, welcoming and accessible to every customer;
- Provide excellent services;
- Provide affordable, high-quality, secure homes; and
- Help to create a cleaner and greener environment

Our objectives

We aim to create an environment where:

- People are confident and proud of the community they live in. They respect one another and are encouraged to realise their potential.
- Our staff are trusted to do the right thing - they are enthusiastic, skilled and willing to go the extra mile for customers.
- Our customer services are excellent, and meet our customers' needs and expectations. We listen to and respect our customers, dealing with enquiries in a helpful and friendly way.
- We care about our local communities. We develop strong partnerships to support them, helping to improve their neighbourhoods.
- We are open and accountable to our residents. We consult and involve them before we make plans and decisions, making sure they are involved from the start.



2 Equality and diversity statement

Put simply, 'equality and diversity' is all about respect for people.

For us, it's about serving and meeting the needs of individuals in a fair and consistent way - whatever their gender, age, race, sexuality, faith or abilities. We are dedicated to doing this in every area of the business and in every service we offer our customers.

Our staff are as diverse as our customers - and that's the way it should be. They are people with different backgrounds, from all walks of life - equally helping to shape our services and the way we offer them to you.

That means every time we deal with you we promise to be fair and respectful, and give the best service to you as an individual. And every time we create a policy or provide a service we promise to make it open and accessible to you and all Southway tenants.



3 How to access our service

We want every one of our residents to be able to access our services in the way that suits them best.

Contacting us

There's a wide choice of ways to contact us. Simply choose the one that suits you.

Call us	0161 448 4200 (8.00am - 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. (Emergencies only outside these hours)
Textphone us	0161 448 4349 (for hearing impaired customers)
Email us	connect2southway@southwayhousing.co.uk
Visit our website	www.southwayhousing.co.uk
Text us	07554 400781(include first line of address and postcode)
Visit us or write to us at:	Aspen House, 825 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, M20 2SN Fax 0161 448 4334

Finding information about our services

As well as this handbook you can get leaflets on our main services by calling 0161 448 4200. You can also find all the information at www.southwayhousing.co.uk

We use plain language to make the information we provide easy to follow. We can also use pictures and symbols to help you, if you have trouble reading.

We're happy to help you read and understand written information and fill in forms, and we will treat these requests with sensitivity. You can also get important information from us on CD, if you find it easier to listen to it than to read it.

Extra help for disabled customers

Some of our residents have extra needs, so we provide information in a variety of formats.

Easy-to-read forms and leaflets

If you have, or someone you know has, reduced or no vision, you can ask for large print, Braille or CD versions of documents such as statements and leaflets. If you need any of these, contact us on the details above.

Lending an ear...

If you have reduced or no hearing, you can talk to us by textphone on 0161 448 4349. We provide signers, lip speakers and a fax service. The counter and meeting rooms at our office have loops available – just ask when you arrive.

www.southwayhousing.co.uk - AAA Absolutely the best!

We have done our best to make sure that nobody misses the benefits of using the Southway website because of a visual impairment or another disability, or because he or she is older, or is not a strong reader.

Our website has the "triple-A" logo – the top mark a website can get for accessibility. This rating means you're sure to understand our site, find your way around it, have your say and do all the things that used to mean visiting an office personally, or writing out and posting long paper forms.

You can even listen to the pages instead of reading them, using the "Browsealoud" system on our website. You can also make the writing bigger or smaller to suit your eyesight.

Access all areas...

Our building has an access ramp, an automatic door, wide doorways and toilets for disabled people. If it's easier for you, we are happy to visit you at home to deal with any housing query, including rehousing and medical assessment.

You could also take advantage of our interactive online web services, so you can keep in contact from the comfort of your own home.

Staff who know your needs

All Southway staff who talk to tenants as part of their job have been trained in disability awareness, so don't hesitate to ask for any help you need.



4 What's In store online?

Welcome to Southway online! Our website is always live, 24 hours a day – and you'd be surprised what you can do there. In fact, when you really start to discover us at www.southwayhousing.co.uk, you might find that you hardly ever need to telephone or visit us in future. Visit our website today and see how we can serve you online.

What can I do on the Southway website?

Repairs

Order repairs directly on our website, anytime you want. Fill in the simple form, and choose your ideal appointment timeslot. You can also check out our service standards and deadlines, see information on 'emergency' repairs, report any problems and apply for compensation for late repairs.

Home improvements

Want to know when you'll get your improvement works done? Just type in the name of your road or street - and our online database does the rest! There's loads of other useful home improvement information on there too - including the standards to which we work, and the choices you'll get when we visit your home.

Rents

Pay your rent without even leaving the house. It's safe and easy to pay using your credit or debit card, and it goes straight into your rent account. You can also check your rent statements online to make sure you're up-to-date with payments. And if you need to order a new rent card, you can do that here too.

Benefits

Claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit online, and see how much you are entitled to. And if you already claim any of these benefits, you can see exactly how they might be affected

if your current situation ever changes – like moving home, starting a new job or having children.

Rehousing

If you're looking for a new home, look no further... use 'Homefinder' to register for rehousing online, check out homes that are available right now with maps and area guides, and exchange your home through 'Homeswap'. There's also useful information for older people who are looking to move into retirement housing.

Home and garden

If you're sick, elderly or disabled, you can apply online for help with decorating and gardening. You can also report problems with your garden or your neighbour's garden. And, depending on your circumstances, you could even apply to put in a driveway.

News

Our website will always be the first to put you in the picture on all things Southway. Be the first to find out about local events, groups and meetings, housing updates, jobs with Southway, Southway Stories and much more.

Your neighbourhood

You can keep us clued-up on your neighbourhood at the click of a button. Report environmental problems on your estate, ask for graffiti to be removed, report a tree problem and tell us about empty homes in your area. And while you're there, check out the dates and times of our estate walkabouts.

Your tenancy

You can virtually run your tenancy on our website! Give official notice to end your tenancy, ask to take over someone else's tenancy, and apply to create a joint tenancy. Depending on your circumstances, you can also apply to sub-let part of your home to someone else.

Antisocial behaviour

You can safely report any kind of antisocial behaviour online, in the privacy of your own home. We'll respond quickly to your enquiries and comments.

Comments and complaints

Tell us what you think, at the click of a mouse. Make a complaint and suggest how we can improve, or tell us what you think we do well. All your comments and questions are welcome online, and we'll respond to them within ten working days at the latest.



But I haven't got the internet!

Chances are, you'll probably live within a mile of free internet access and free advice on how to use it – look no further than your local library.

Please call each library for their opening times.

Barlow Moor Library,

40 Merseybank Avenue, M21 7NN
0161 446 2061

Burnage Library,

Burnage Lane, M19 1EW
0161 442 9036

Chorlton Library,

Manchester Road, M21 9PN
0161 881 3179

Didsbury Library,

692 Wilmslow Road, M20 2DN
0161 445 3220

Fallowfield Library,

Platt Lane, M14 7FB
0161 224 4153

Withington Library,

410 Wilmslow Road, M20 3BN
0161 445 1991

Scared of a mouse...

If you've never used the internet before, or even turned on a computer, you might feel as though there's no point starting now.

But that's where you're wrong!

It might look difficult, but it's actually really easy – and there are plenty of places in your local area that are willing to show you how. All the libraries listed above will point you in the right direction for free computer training for beginners – ready to help you learn, at your own pace.



5 Rent and benefits

We want to make it even easier and more convenient for you to pay your rent or service charge.

Ways to pay your rent

We want to make it really easy for you to keep up-to-date with your rent payments, even when you're away from home. Always remember, whichever way you pay, you should keep the receipt or payment reference number that you are given at the time.

Online

Use your bank debit card or credit card to pay online (through secure 'allpay' Internet Payments). All you need is your 19 digit payment number (on your new rent card and rent statement) and a credit or debit card. If you have problems, check that you have JavaScript and Cookies enabled on your computer. Pay online today.



By direct debit

One of the easiest and best ways to pay. No queuing and no need for using debit or credit cards. You won't even need your rent card. Just call us on 0161 448 4200 and we can set up the direct debit over the phone (or send us your completed direct debit form). Once your direct debit is set up, it will automatically pay your rent (weekly, every two weeks, every four weeks or monthly – it's up to you). So you can forget about it and get on with your life.

By text message

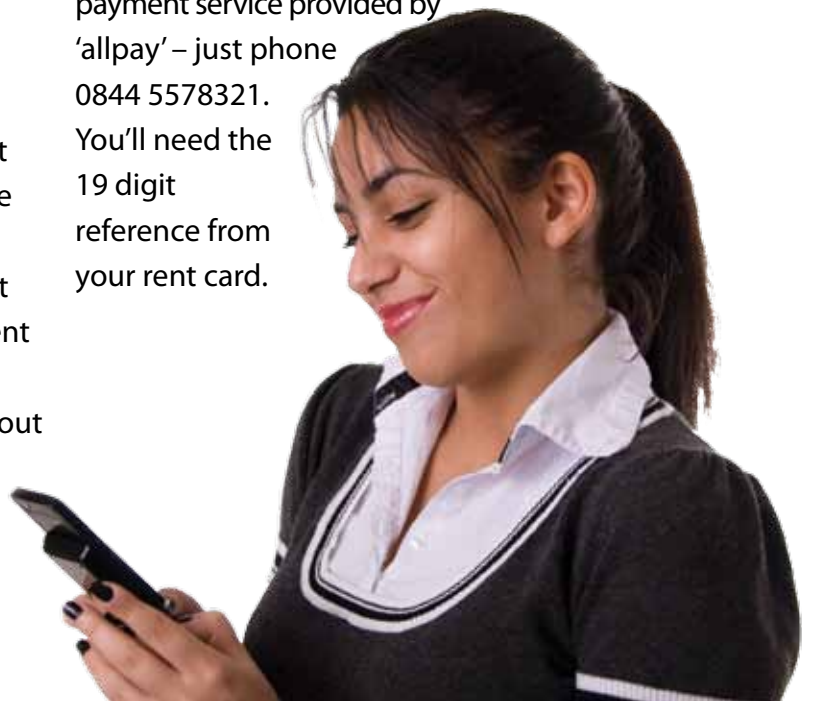
All you need is a UK registered mobile phone and you can pay your rent any time, anywhere. To set this up, visit our online payments provider 'allpay' at www.allpayments.net and register your credit or debit card. You can then pick a text code and will be sent your text password. Once this is all set up, you can make your rent payment by texting 'pay' to 81025, along with your text code, password, and amount that you want to pay.

By standing order

This is similar to a direct debit. The money goes in straightaway, and there's no danger you'll forget to pay! However, this is a financial instruction between you and your bank (rather than between you and ourselves). We have a simple form online for you to print out, fill in and send to your bank. Go to 'standing order form'. You'll need to put your tenancy reference number (it's on your rent card). If you can't print out the form, or need advice, please contact us.

By phone

Call 0161 448 4200 to pay by bank debit card or credit card. Have your tenancy reference number to hand. Or you can use the 24-hour automated payment service provided by 'allpay' – just phone 0844 5578321. You'll need the 19 digit reference from your rent card.



At the post office

Use your rent card to pay at any post office. Pay by cash, cheque or debit/credit card. It's a free service.

By post

Send a cheque (made out to Southway Housing Trust) to: Southway Housing Trust, Aspen House, 825 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, M20 2SN. Write your name, address and tenancy reference number (from your rent card) on the back of the cheque. Don't send cash through the post!

At a paypoint outlet



We've now switched from Payzone to Paypoint. Paypoint has 26 outlets throughout the Southway area.

Just like Payzone, you can pay your rent or service charge at a Paypoint, using your Southway rent card and cash or your debit/credit card.

To find your nearest outlet check online at www.paypoint.co.uk

NOTE – you can no longer pay at Manchester City Council's Town Hall counter.

How we calculate your rent (and other charges)

Until recently housing associations and housing trusts like Southway have all used slightly different ways of setting rents. This means that it has been difficult to compare the rents charged by not-for-profit landlords in different areas, as well as those in neighbouring areas.

The Government wants housing association rents to:

- Remain affordable;
- Generally be well below those charged by private landlords;
- Be linked to the size, location and condition of the home; and
- Be similar to rents for other council and housing association homes of a similar size, location and condition.

Following consultation with councils and housing associations, the Government produced a formula for setting rents which takes into account:

- The value of the property;
- The number of bedrooms in the property; and
- Local earnings.

The rent is known as the 'formula rent' or 'target rent'. The government has calculated a formula rent for each of our homes. We need to bring our rents in line with the formula rents by March 2012.

We're increasing our rents gradually to reach those figures. To make sure that tenants don't face an unacceptably large rent increase in any year, we make sure our annual increase is no more than inflation plus 0.5% plus £2.

In addition to rent, you may have to pay other charges to Southway, including:

- Fixed weekly heating charges if your home is part of a communal heating scheme - please note that these are not covered by housing benefit;
- A furnished tenancy charge, where we have furnished or part furnished your home for you.

Your Neighbourhood Officer will have explained exactly what you have to pay, when you first signed for your Southway tenancy. If you are not sure what you should be paying, or there has been a change in your circumstances that affects your income or benefits, contact us straight away for advice.

Rent-free weeks

The rent you have to pay is worked out over 50 pay weeks each year. That means there are two rent-free weeks. These are the week that includes Christmas Day (or the week after if Christmas Day falls on a weekend), and the week starting the first Monday in April. Here are the rent-free weeks for the next few years:

Year	Week one	Week two
2010	Mon 5 – Sun 11 April	Mon 27 Dec – Sun 2 Jan
2011	Mon 4 – Sun 10 April	Mon 26 Dec – Sun 1 Jan
2012	Mon 2 – Sun 8 April	Mon 24 – Sun 30 Dec
2013	Mon 1 – Sun 7 April	Mon 23 – Sun 29 Dec
2014	Mon 22 – Sun 28 Dec	Mon 7 – Sun 13 April
2015	Mon 21 – Sun 27 Dec	Mon 6 – Sun 12 April

How do the rent-free weeks affect you?

*If you pay your rent **every month** through your bank/building society*

If you pay rent every month through your bank or building society, you don't need to do anything on the above dates, because your monthly payment will have already been calculated to take the rent-free weeks into account.

*If you pay your rent **every week** through your bank/building society*

If you pay rent every week through your bank, you can set the standing order to pay for just 50 weeks of the year, and tell your bank not to make payments on the rent-free weeks.

Or, if you want to, you can pay your rent over 52 weeks but still get the benefit of the two rent-free weeks in a different way. To do this:

- 1 Take your weekly rent
- 2 Multiply it by 50 to get your yearly rent
- 3 Divide your annual rent by 52 to get your new weekly rent
- 4 Ask your bank to pay that amount to us every week.

So, if Mr Smith pays £100 per week but wants to spread his rent over 52 weeks rather than 50, his calculation would look like this:

- 1 Weekly rent = £100
- 2 Multiplied by 50 = £5,000 yearly rent
- 3 Divided by 52 = £96.15 new weekly rent.

If you pay any other way

Just make a note of the rent free weeks, and don't make a payment in those weeks. If you do have any problems, call us on 0161 448 4200 and we'll be happy to help.

No rent-free weeks for tenants in arrears.

If you owe rent on your account, you won't get these rent-free weeks – you will have to pay every week of the year until the account is clear. So it's worth sorting out any arrears right away.

If you owe rent

We understand the problems of getting by on a limited budget, so we're ready and willing to help you as much as we can to sort things out. You don't have to pay off what you owe all at once – we can work out a plan for you to pay it off in small, regular amounts that you can more easily afford. Just call us on 0161 448 4200 to

make an arrangement, or make an appointment to see someone from our Income Management team. You can also fill in the form at www.southwayhousing.co.uk, by clicking on the "At Your Service" tab.

Money worries?

There's no need to worry, because we can help you get back on track for a debt-free future - and our expert advisers won't charge you a penny for it. They can deal with all kinds of debts - including credit cards, catalogues, overdrafts, loans, store cards, doorstep collectors, council tax and hire purchase.

And they are there to help -- never to judge on how much you owe, or why you owe it. They can:

- Give you completely free, confidential help from start to finish;
- Meet you at home or in our office;
- Contact people to whom you owe money;
- Negotiate with them, so you can make smaller repayments;
- Work on higher-level bankruptcies and other debt solutions;
- Make sure you're getting the right benefits;
- Help you organise your money for a debt-free future.

Just call us on 0161 448 4200 and we will be able to assist.

Are you getting the full benefit?

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit can often be paid to people on lower incomes. It can pay some, or all, of your rent and Council Tax, depending on your circumstances - how much you earn, how many children you've got and so on. The Government says how much benefit people get. This system is run by Manchester City Council.

How is it worked out?

The Council looks at the rent you pay and checks:

- How much you and your partner have coming in – including wages, pensions, some benefits and tax credits;
- How much you need to spend on things like childcare;
- Your savings and your partner's savings;
- Your circumstances – your age, the ages and size of your family, if you or any member of your family is disabled, and if anyone living with you could be expected to help with the rent.

Your circumstances

The government works out the amount of money that someone in your circumstances needs to live on. If your income is less than this amount, and there's no-one else living with you who could help out with the rent, you'll probably get full benefit – which means you wouldn't have to pay any rent yourself. If your income is more than this amount you will have to pay some, or all, of the rent yourself. The higher your income, the more you will have to pay towards your rent.

Housing Benefit is paid directly into your rent account. So, for example, if your rent is £100 each week, and you're entitled to £70 housing benefit, you will only have to pay £30 a week yourself.

Find out how much you could claim

Our easy-to-use online rent and benefit calculator tells you how much you should pay, and the benefits you might be able to get. If you don't have access to the Internet, contact the Benefits Service on:

Phone: 0161 219 6100 (Mon to Fri 8.45am - 5pm)

Textphone: 0161 953 8301

Email: benefit.enquiries@manchester.gov.uk

How to claim

Did you know it could take up to 13 weeks before your claim is processed? Make your

claim as soon as you can, or you'll risk losing the benefit to which you're entitled! Are you moving home? Have you got new people living in your home, or are you retiring from work? Make a claim now if you know your circumstances are going to change.

To make a claim:

- Fill in a claim form online - it's the quickest way to claim. You can also print off and fill in the claim form; or
- Contact the Benefits Service – the details are just above.

NEVER DELAY MAKING A CLAIM

Having problems paying rent?

If you are having trouble making your rent payments, you must contact our Income Management team immediately to discuss your difficulties. Call us on 0161 448 4200. Do not delay – there may be benefits you can claim.

Our friendly and highly experienced staff will talk to you sympathetically about the situation and, in most cases, will be able to help you in a number of ways. We will:

- Make an arrangement with you to pay off your arrears in an affordable way;
- Check to see if you are entitled to Housing Benefit, and advise you on how to claim;
- Offer advice on more suitable and convenient ways to pay your rent;
- Help you to obtain debt counselling or advice on money management by arranging an appointment with our Debt Advisor;
- Help you to obtain welfare benefits advice by arranging an appointment with a welfare benefits adviser.

Recovering rent arrears

We operate a very robust arrears recovery process. This includes telephoning and writing to tenants in arrears, visiting them at home and arranging for them to attend interviews in the office.

In more severe cases, where we are unable to recover money you owe to us, we may take further action. This could include serving a Notice telling you that we will be asking the Court to give us possession of your home, and getting a Court Order to do this and recover your rent arrears. If we cannot contain and reduce the debt, we may ultimately have to evict you from your home.

If your case goes to Court you may be liable for the Court costs and, in most cases, will be ordered by the Court, to pay your rent plus any additional costs the Court sees fit.

We will always ensure that we do everything in our power to keep you in your home. But if you won't pay what you owe we may have no option but to evict you. Between April 2008 and March 2009 we evicted eight tenants because they refused to pay their rent.



6 Tenancy rights and obligations

As your landlord, Southway has certain obligations to you as a tenant and, in return, you have obligations to the Trust. In addition you have a number of rights. All of these are set out in full in your Tenancy Agreement.

Below are the Trust's key obligations, and your key obligations as Tenant. Your main rights are also listed below:

The Trust's key obligations

Possession

The Trust will give you possession of the premises at the start of the tenancy.

Repair of structure and exterior

The Trust will keep the structure and exterior of the premises in repair including:

- The roof;
- Drains, gutters and external pipes;
- Outside walls, outside doors, window sills and window frames, including any necessary painting or decoration;
- Internal walls, skirting boards, doors and door frames, door jambs, thresholds, floors and ceilings (but not painting and decoration);
- Major internal plasterwork (but not minor faults or hairline cracks);
- Chimneys and chimney stacks (but not sweeping the chimneys where solid fuel open fires are in use);
- Fences and gates (where provided by the Trust), pathways, steps, ramps and stairlifts;
- Garages and outbuildings (where provided by the Trust).

The Trust is not responsible for any repair or replacement needed because of damage to, or neglect of, the premises that has been caused by you, anyone living with you or by your visitors.

Repair of installations

The Trust will keep in repair, and proper working order, any installations provided or adopted by the Trust for space heating, water heating and sanitation and for the supply of water, gas and electricity, including:

- Water pipes and tanks, gas pipes and electrical wiring;
- Electrical sockets and light fittings (but not plugs, fuses, light bulbs or your own appliances);
- Basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems, waste pipes and tap washers;
- Water heaters, boilers, fireplaces, fitted fires and radiators.

Repairs – generally

The Trust will carry out all repairs in what it considers to be a reasonable timescale. And from time to time, review them in consultation with you.

Consents (permissions)

It is implied that the Trust will not unreasonably refuse its consent. This means that, wherever possible, we will grant you permission if you request it. In some circumstances, consent may only be given subject to certain reasonable conditions, with which you must comply. Failure to keep to these conditions would then be a breach of your tenancy, and might entitle the Trust to take Court action.

Your key obligations

Possession

You agree that: You will take possession of the premises at the start of the tenancy, and not part with possession of the premises or sublet the whole of it. This means that you must occupy the property as your home. If you move out, we would expect you to end your tenancy. If you allow others to live there, you cannot move out and allow them to occupy it separately from you – you must continue to live in the property yourself.

Rent

You will pay the rent and any applicable service charge, (for example, charges for heating), weekly in advance, (including at the start of the tenancy), on Monday in each relevant week apart from in any week or weeks which the Trust determines to be “rent free weeks”.

Nuisance and antisocial behaviour

You are responsible for the behaviour of every person (including children) living in or visiting your home. You are responsible in your home, or on surrounding land, in communal areas (stairs, lifts, landings, entrance halls, paving, sheds, gardens, parking areas), and in the locality around your home.

You (or anyone living with you or visiting your home) must not cause or commit any form of antisocial behaviour at, or within the locality of, your home. Antisocial behaviour means any act or omission which interferes with the peace and comfort of others, or which may cause nuisance, annoyance, injury or offence to any other tenants, members of their household, visitors, neighbours, the Trust (including its employees and contractors and representatives), or any other member of the general public.

Racial and other harassment You (or anyone living with you or visiting your home) must not commit any form of harassment at or within the

locality of your home (including harassment on the grounds of age, gender, race, culture, ability or lifestyle) which may interfere with the peace and comfort of, or cause offence to, any other tenant, member of their household, visitor, neighbour or employee or representative of the Trust. This includes, but is not limited to, racist or sexist behaviour or language, abuse, threatened or actual violence, threats of damage, abusive or insulting graffiti, mail, telephone calls, email or text messages.

Domestic violence

You (or anyone living with you or visiting your home) must not inflict domestic violence on any person. You must not threaten violence, or use mental, emotional, physical or sexual abuse against your partner, your ex-partner, or any member of your family or household.

Noise

You (or anyone living with you or visiting your home) must not cause noise nuisance to any other person at or within the locality of your home.

Breach of the peace

You (or anyone living with you or visiting your home) must not act in any way that is likely to lead to a breach of the peace at, or within, the locality of your home, or at any premises owned by the Trust.

Pets

You (or anyone living with you) can only keep small domestic animals as pets. This includes dogs and cats, small animals or birds kept in an indoor cage (external fixed cages or aviaries are not permitted), or fish or reptiles (kept in an indoor tank) on the premises. Pets must be kept under proper control and not be allowed to cause nuisance – such as noise, or fouling of garden and communal areas. If there are complaints which are found to be justified, this could be considered a breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

Improvements

You must not make any improvements, alterations or additions to the premises without first obtaining both the written consent of the Trust and all other necessary approvals. Such improvements include (but are not limited to):

- removal of any internal walls or integral fixtures or fittings;
- erecting any structure in the garden of the premises;
- cutting down any tree, or removing any hedge or other boundary line or making a vehicular access from the highway into the premises.

Maintenance and redecoration inside the property

You must keep the interior of the premises in good repair and in a clean and good decorative condition. You must decorate all internal parts of the premises as frequently as is necessary to keep them in reasonable decorative order. The Trust might be able to help you if you are elderly or disabled, and have nobody else available who might reasonably be expected to assist.

Gardens

You must keep your garden areas neat and tidy and free from rubbish. Lawns must be cut and hedges trimmed.

Minor repairs

You will be expected to carry out certain minor repairs, which are classed as “Tenants’ responsibility”, to the premises yourself. These include the following:

- easing internal doors;
- the maintenance of non-standard appliances, fixtures, fittings, extensions and additions – where they have been installed by you with or without permission unless formally adopted by the Trust;
- the replacement of lost or damaged keys, and the replacement of locks caused by the losing of keys (where the Trust so decides);
- TV aerials or satellite dishes (unless communal),

and any damage to property or neighbouring property that has been caused by their installation;

- Clothes posts and lines (unless communal).

Damage

You must pay the Trust for the cost of repairing any damage to the premises, fixtures or the Trust’s fittings, if this was caused by your neglect, by a deliberate act, or by default. You are held responsible for such damage if it was caused by you, your family, friends or visitors.

Reporting disrepair

You must report to the Trust promptly any disrepair or defect of which you are aware, and which is the Trust’s responsibility to repair.

Access

You must give the duly authorised officers, agents and operatives of the Trust, and the gas, water and electricity supply companies access to the premises if this is required. This would normally be for the purposes of inspection safety checks, and for carrying out work to the property or to any adjoining properties as may be necessary.

The Trust will normally give you 24 hours notice when it requires access, unless it believes entry is necessary immediately because of an emergency that could cause personal injury, or damage to the premises or to neighbouring property.

Ending the tenancy

You must give the Trust at least 4 weeks’ notice in writing (expiring at 12 noon on a Monday) when you wish to end the Tenancy.

Your rights

Right to occupy

You have the right to occupy the premises, without interruption or interference from the Trust, for the duration of your tenancy so long as you comply with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement and have the proper respect for the rights of other tenants and neighbours.

Security of tenure

You have security of tenure so long as you keep to your Tenancy Agreement and occupy the premises as your "only or principal home". The Trust can only end the tenancy by obtaining a Court Order for possession of the premises on one of the grounds listed in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988. Please see your Tenancy Agreement for full details about security of tenure. If there is anything you do not understand, please contact us.

Right to repairs

You have a right to have qualifying repairs done in set timescales.

Right to consultation

The Trust will consult you before making changes in matters of housing management or maintenance that are likely to have a substantial effect on you.

Rights of succession / assignment

Please see your Tenancy Agreement for the full details of this right.

Right to your exchange

Please see your Tenancy Agreement for full details of this right.

Right to buy

If you were a tenant of Manchester City Council immediately prior to the transfer to Southway Housing Trust and have continued to be a tenant of the premises you will still have the right to buy your home. Please see your Tenancy Agreement for the full details of this right.



IF YOU ARE NOT CLEAR ABOUT ANY OF THE TENANCY RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS, PLEASE CONTACT US FOR AN EXPLANATION

7 Your right to repair

Southway Housing offers a repairs service to strict standards and timescales. Although we offer appointments to suit you, you may find it suits you even better to make simple repairs yourself. Take a look at our Easy DIY guide (Section 9 on page 22), for advice on common household repairs you could tackle.

Right to repair compensation

We work hard to make sure that repairs are done properly, on time, and at your convenience.

Our appointment system lets you choose the time your repair is done, and our website www.southwayhousing.co.uk allows you to report a repair.

Because of the nature of repairs work, delays can sometimes happen. But you have the legal right to cash compensation if an unreasonable delay puts your health, safety or security at risk. Certain conditions apply.

How it works

The 'right to repair' scheme covers smaller urgent jobs. These would cost us less than £250 to put right and would normally be done within a few days.

We have to do repairs within a certain time – the more urgent the job, the shorter the deadline. When you order a repair, we will tell you the deadline for doing it. If it qualifies for the Right to Repair, and we have not done it by the agreed time, you can ask us to order the work from a different company.

The second company is given the same length of time as we were given ourselves to do the repair. If they fail to do it in time, you can get compensation.

The longer you have to wait for the repair to be done, the more cash you will get back. But we may use the compensation to pay off anything you might owe us, like rent arrears, first, before we pay you the balance.

To get compensation you must have:

- Told us when it's convenient for us to call;
- Let the workers into your home at the arranged time;
- Told us when the deadline passed;
- Asked us to order the work from another company;
- Told them that their deadline has also passed.

You **can't** get compensation under the Right to Repair if:

- We have inspected and attended to the repair, and advised you that the parts we need are on order; or
- We have told you the repair is one you must pay for first.

If the work is still not done after the second deadline, you can claim £10 compensation, and another £2 for every day that goes by without the job being done - up to a maximum of £50.

You can apply for compensation by contacting us on **0161 448 4200**.

You could get compensation on these repairs:

Electrics

- Loss of some or all power
- Dangerous sockets or fittings

Water and gas

- Loss of some or all water supply
- Loss of some or all hot water
- Loss of some or all gas supply

Heating

- Loss of some or all heating
- Blocked flue on an open fire or boiler

Floors and stairs

- Rotting timber
- Faulty banister or handrail

Plumbing

- Blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack
- Blocked or leaking toilet pan or (only) toilet not flushing
- Blocked sink, bath or basin
- Taps that will not turn
- Leaking pipe, tank or cistern

Roofs, windows and doors

- Leaking roof
- Insecure window or outside door
- Broken door entry phone

Extractor fans

- Broken kitchen or bathroom fan

8 Water, gas and electricity in your home

Before things go wrong and you need to get them fixed in a hurry, it's worth finding out where certain things are in your home, like your stop-tap and fuse box.

So please take some time to find the location of a few key items, and make a note of where they are in the boxes below. If you need any help, just call us on 0161 448 4200.

Key item	Where it is
The mains water stop-tap This is likely to be very close to the kitchen sink. It's a special tap on the main pipe that supplies water into your home.	
Electricity fuse box This will be near an external wall and near to your electricity meter.	
Gas tap / meter You should see a small upright pipe running up the outside of your home and through the external wall. Your gas tap and meter should be in the room on the other side of that wall.	
Central heating boiler It's usually a rectangular box inside your home. If you can't find it, follow the gas pipe from your gas meter.	
Hot water cylinder A large round cylinder, usually in the kitchen, bathroom or loft.	
Water tank This is always higher up than the hot water cylinder, usually in the loft.	

9 Easy DIY: Do you need to order a repair?

Before you call us out to fix a problem in your home, there might be a few things you can do to help. You can do the repair yourself, or make sure the problem doesn't get any worse before we get there.

Problems with pipes

When they leak – a slight flow of water

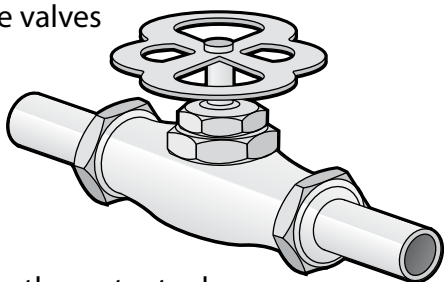
Pull back any carpets that are affected and use towels to absorb any moisture. Then place a bowl (or something like a baking tin, if there is no room for a bowl or bucket) underneath the leak, to catch dripping water. Ring us on 0161 448 4200. Don't forget to keep checking the bowl to make sure it doesn't overflow.

When they freeze – no water coming out in very cold weather

Follow steps 1 and 2 below and call us on 0161 448 4200.

When they burst – an uncontrollable flow of water

- 1 Turn the water supply off at the stop-tap. It's probably near the kitchen sink. Turn off any gate valves



from the water tank – these are normally next to the tank.

- 2 Turn the cold taps ON. Make sure all the sink and bath plugs are out. Save some drinking water in a jug for later.
- 3 Turn the immersion heater and central heating OFF, if you have them. If you have a solid fuel boiler, let the fire die out.
- 4 Turn the hot taps ON to drain the water out of the system.

- 5 If there's water near the lights or sockets, turn the electricity off at the meter.
- 6 Catch leaks in basins and soak up water with towels as much as you can to prevent water damaging your home.
- 7 Phone us on 0161 448 4200 (8am - 5.30pm, Monday to Friday). You can use this number outside normal office hours as well if the problem is an emergency that threatens your health, safety or security.
- 8 Try to keep warm and dry. Put on extra layers of clothes till things warm up again.

When ceilings bulge due to flooding from burst pipes

Place a bucket under it, and carefully pierce a small hole in the middle of the bulge to let the water through.

If electric fittings get wet DO NOT touch them. Turn electricity off at the meter with dry hands.

Can you smell gas?

- Open all doors and windows
- DON'T
 - turn any electrical switches on or off
 - use the doorbell
 - smoke, or use matches or lighters
- Make sure the gas on the cooker is switched off. Then check to see if the small 'pilot' light on your boiler has gone out - it's a small flame that you should see through the spy hole on your boiler. If it's not there, turn the boiler off, and don't turn it on until the smell of gas has left the house.

- *If you can still smell gas, turn the main gas supply off at the gas meter. Then call Transco on 0800 111 999.*

Control your central heating

Control the temperature

Your thermostat controls the temperature. Turn the dial, so the arrow or marker is at the temperature you want. A comfortable temperature is usually between 18°C and 22°C.

Set a digital timer

Firstly, check the clock is showing the right time. If it isn't, put the timer switch to 'clock' and change the time using the 'forward' and 'reverse' buttons. Reset the timer to 'auto'. Then set the 'heating' and 'hot water' switches to come on whenever you want them to. In freezing weather it is best to keep the heating on all the time, and turn the thermostat down low at night or when you're out.

Set a clock timer

Turn the clock until it shows the right time. Decide when you want the heating to come on and off, and set the small pins or arrows to those times.

- If your timer has pins, push them in against any time you want the heating to come on and pull them out against the time you want the heating off.
- If your timer has arrows, slide the red ones to the time when you want the heating to come on, and slide the blue ones to the time you want the heating off.

Then set the timer switch to 'timer' or 'auto'. In freezing weather keep the thermostat on low through the night or when you're out.

Bleeding your radiator

Does it need doing?

If the top part of the radiator is cold, it means that air is trapped in the heating system. Bleeding the radiator releases this air and lets the hot water in so that the whole radiator warms up.

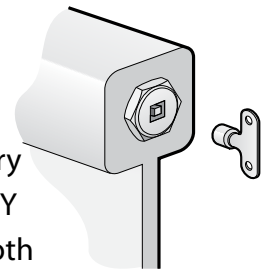
When you shouldn't do it

Don't bleed your radiator if you have a combination boiler (combi-boiler) – unless you are confident about restoring the correct pressure to your boiler afterwards. A combi-boiler will have a pressure gauge or measure on the front of the boiler, and it won't have a separate hot water cylinder. Bleeding your radiators will result in a drop in boiler pressure that has to be restored afterwards so, if you are not sure how to do this, ring us on 0161 448 4200 instead.

Don't bleed your radiator if the whole radiator is cold or more than one radiator is cold. We may need to check the whole heating system if this happens.

How to do it

- Turn off the heating system.
- You will need a special radiator key – if you can't find it, you can get one very cheaply from your local DIY store. You'll also need a cloth and a small bucket.
- Put the key over the small square valve at the top end of the radiator and hold the cloth around it. Gently turn the key anticlockwise until you hear a hiss of air. Don't unscrew it completely. When the water starts to come through, turn the key back clockwise quickly to shut the valve off. When you turn on the heating, the radiator should now become warm at the top.



When your power goes off

Fuse or trip switch?

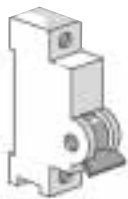
Check your consumer unit or fuse box near your electricity meter. It will either have a fuse or trip switch.

If it has a fuse ...

Only replace a fuse if you are confident you can do it safely, and have a replacement of the same amp. Your current fuse will have the amp on it. If in doubt, call us on 0161 448 4200 or call a qualified electrician.

If you have a trip switch...

Open the consumer unit, to see which switches have tripped to the OFF position. To restore power, flick them back to the ON position.



Why does it happen?

Common causes include:

- Too many electrical items being used at the same time;
- A faulty or misused electrical item;
- Overfilled kettles;
- Unclean toasters;
- Worn-out cooker rings;
- Faulty immersion heaters;
- Faulty connections on leads to stereo, TV, computer, etc.

If it happens again

You've probably got a faulty electrical item that needs replacing. Go around the house noting which set of lights or sockets are not working. Unplug all appliances on that problem circuit and switch off the immersion heater. Switch the tripped fuse to the ON position and plug in the appliances, one by one, until the trip switch goes again. Leave that appliance unplugged. If one of our appliances is at fault, report the repair; otherwise you will need to get it fixed yourself by a qualified electrician or service engineer.

Clearing blockages in the sink or bath

By plunger

Remove any water from the bath or sink with a jug. Block the overflow by holding a large rag cloth over the opening. Place a plunger (you can get one from a DIY shop) over the plughole and quickly push it up and down. When the blockage is cleared, you should clean out the trap where the waste has gone.

By clearing the waste trap

Remove any water from the bath or sink with a jug, and make sure the taps are off. Put a bowl underneath the trap to collect the waste. Then unscrew the joints and remove and clean out the trap. Put the trap back, making sure the seals are in place and the joints are screwed back tightly.

When you might need us

If the toilet is blocked or if more than one fitting is blocked, it will probably need to be cleared by one of our repair workers.

Prevent blockages

Bits of food, hair and other small particles that get through the plughole can cause a blockage. Try to avoid getting these things down the sink, if you can. And keep the plughole clean by occasionally flushing with hot water and soda crystals.

Nappies, toys, sanitary towels and air fresheners can block the toilet. Be sure not to let this happen, because if you can't remove the blockage, we'll have to charge you for clearing it. Nappies are a major cause of blockages, so always dispose of these sensibly – not down the toilet.

Keep out damp and mould

Put a ban on moisture:

- Cover pans on the cooker and don't leave kettles boiling;
- Never use paraffin or portable bottle gas heaters – you would be breaking your tenancy agreement if you used things like this. They produce huge amounts of water vapour, and can be very dangerous to use;
- Dry washing outside, or in a closed bathroom with an open window or fan – not on radiators;
- If you have a tumble dryer, put the outlet pipe through an outside wall – not out of a window. Condenser type tumble dryers are best, as they keep moisture levels down.

Let your home breathe:

- Let the air circulate and open a small window when you're at home;
- Let out steam by opening kitchen and bathroom windows or using extractor fans;
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when you're in there;
- Don't overcrowd your wardrobes or cupboards;
- Don't block ventilators or chimneys.

Keep it warm:

- Insulate your loft - but don't block openings or under the eaves;
- If it's cold keep the heating on low all day, even when you're out;
- Draught-proof windows and doors - but get rid of mould and condensation first;
- Don't completely draught-proof bathrooms, or rooms with a cooker or gas fire – you need to have some ventilation.

10 What to expect when you order a repair

You can order routine repairs online or on the phone on 0161 448 4200. Our phone lines are open from 8am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. You can also report an emergency repair on the same phone number 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but please call us only if the problem threatens your health, safety or security.

We have timescales for doing repairs. The more urgent the work, the quicker we'll do it. And we deal with emergency repairs within three hours. When you call, tell us all you know – describe the problem, and say where it is. You can help by telling us the make and model of whatever might be causing the problem - the boiler, for example, so the engineer can turn up with the right replacement parts.

We will immediately order the repair, or arrange an inspection to check exactly what needs doing.

Inspections

If it isn't clear what repairs are needed, or if the repair is complicated, we'll make an appointment to visit you at home. We'll do an inspection and decide exactly what repair is needed.

How long does it take?

When you ask for a repair, we give the work a deadline - depending on its urgency. The first appointment we offer you will be before that deadline.

We give your repair one of four deadlines. They are:

- Emergencies - within three hours;
- Urgent - between one and five working days depending on the nature of the defect;
- Routine - 10 working days;
- Major - 45 working days.

A working day is Monday to Friday. So, if you contact us on Tuesday morning, we will come to a five day job by Monday of the next week at the latest, because Saturday and Sunday don't count as working days. Here's what's in each repairs category:

Emergencies – three hours

We don't make appointments for emergency repairs, because we do them within three hours – we'll just tell you to stay in and wait for the worker to call. The sorts of things we class as emergencies include:

- Blocked toilets, if there are no other toilets in your home;
- Blocked or leaking drains (not blocked sinks);
- Serious storm, accident or flood damage to rooms;
- Dangerous structures;
- Serious electrical faults;
- No mains water supply;
- Regaining entry where you are locked out – although we are likely to charge for this;
- Loss of heating, in very cold weather;
- Loss of heating at any time of year for elderly or vulnerable people living alone, and for families with children under 12 months.

If you have extra needs, or feel you really need immediate attention, we may be able to class your repair as an emergency.

When you phone we will ask you questions, to check whether the work really needs doing as an

emergency. If it does, we will send someone to your home within three hours. In some situations it may only be possible for workmen to attend and make the situation safe temporarily. The repair will then be completed in normal working hours.

Urgent repairs

We will carry out this type of repair within five working days.

Examples of urgent repairs are:

- Electrical repairs;
- Minor leaks;
- Loss of hot water;
- Partial loss of heating;
- Blocked sink;
- Faulty toilet;
- Running overflow;
- Minor repairs to windows;
- Single glazing and doors.

Routine repairs

We will carry out this type of repair within ten working days. Examples of routine repairs are:

- Floor tiles and boards;
- Double glazing;
- Gate repairs;
- Broken kitchen units;
- Minor plastering;
- Broken handles;
- Outside repairs;
- Replacement boiler;
- Replacement fires or radiators;
- Broken or uneven paving flags.

Major repairs

These are repairs where your day-to-day life is not adversely affected and/or the work needs specialist manufacture. Examples would be fitting a new damp proof course, new external door or new window frame, fencing, a roof that needs overhauling, or a heating system that needs taking out and replacing. A repair usually gets this deadline after we have been to check a problem and found that we need to totally replace a large item, rather than just repair it. This priority allows for better resource planning and programming of non-urgent, non-routine repair works.

Repairs appointments

Apart from emergency repairs, where we ask you to wait for us to arrive, you can make an appointment to get most repairs done at a time that suits you. Appointments are Monday to Friday, with five appointment slots each day, from early morning to early evening. This means there's no need for you to wait in all day for someone to turn up!



Repairs appointments (continued)

When you order a repair we'll offer you an appointment for that job and give you other times to choose from if necessary. The first appointment slot will be within the deadline time for that repair – so, for a five day repair, you will be able to pick an appointment for some time within the next five working days. If it will take us five working days or more to come and do the repair we will, if you ask, send you a confirmation letter.

Early morning	8am - 10.30am
Late morning	10am - 12.30pm
Early afternoon	12pm - 2.30pm
Late afternoon	2pm - 4pm
Early evening	4pm - 6pm

Making sure your repair happens

Be there for your repair!

At Southway we work hard to make sure that we carry out repairs when it suits our tenants, so you don't need to wait in more than a few hours for the repair team. All we ask of you is that you be there for your repair. If you can't be there, tell us in advance and we'll re-book a better time for you.

DON'T FORGET – when someone calls – **always ask for ID.** All our staff and our contractors carry photo identification cards, and there is an office contact telephone number on the back of the card if you want to check the identity of the worker. **If in doubt, check first.**

During the repair

The worker will do the repair or carry out the inspection and will leave the job clean and tidy. If they can't do all the work needed on that visit, they will explain why and arrange another appointment with you.

If the problem is being inspected first, they will tell you what needs doing, and by when it will be done – the deadline for the repair.

After the repair

You can help us improve our service by telling us how we've done. After a repair is completed, we will leave you a form asking you how satisfied you were with the work. Please take the time to complete this and return it to us – it's free to post it back.

If you tell us you were not happy with the work, we will contact you and look into it. If there is still a problem, we will put it right.

We regularly publicise our repairs performance (such as, how many jobs are done on time) on our website and in our newsletters.

Have we said no to your repair?

We always repair rather than replace if possible, to keep down costs. We may not carry out a repair straight away. For example, it wouldn't make sense for us to repair a kitchen unit, if we were planning to put in new kitchens to your home in the next few months. We don't replace a working item just for minor cosmetic reasons, such as discoloured plastic baths or surface cracks in a washbasin.

Repairs you must do yourself

By law, we must do certain repairs – on the structure of your home, on gas, electricity, plumbing, heating installations and so on. These repairs are free.

But there are other, smaller jobs that you must do yourself, although we will do many of them if you are disabled or elderly (*these are marked (S) on the list below*).

Examples of these are:

- Faulty fittings that were not put in by us or the Council (unless you have an agreement for us to maintain them) like cookers, fridges,

showers and window blinds;

- Hairline cracks in plaster;
- Broken or missing plugs and chains for a basin, sink or bath (S);
- Relighting pilot lights (S);
- Telephone points;
- TV aerials and sockets (unless they are communal);
- Loss of keys;
- Internal decoration (paintwork and wallpaper) and floor coverings;
- Fixtures and fittings (like coat hooks, curtains, curtain rails and washing line).

Repairs you must pay for

Most people take a real pride in their homes, but there are a few who damage things deliberately or thoughtlessly. We don't want decent tenants to pick up the bill for putting this right, so people who cause damage deliberately or by neglect have to pay for the repair.

We will normally carry out all repairs that are essential to protect the health and safety of you and your household, or that are necessary to protect and maintain our property. We do, however, have the right to decide whether or not we will carry out a rechargeable repair. If you owe money to Southway and have not made an agreement to repay it, we may refuse to carry out any repairs we are not legally obliged to do.

What counts as deliberate damage or neglect?

You won't have to pay for things that have been damaged by fair wear and tear. Neither will you have to pay if the damage was caused by a crime – as long as you have reported it to the Police. We will ask you for evidence of this. If there is doubt about the reason for the damage, we will investigate before we make a decision. We will also decide what action to take if you have broken your tenancy agreement, for example by carrying out alterations without getting our permission first, or if there are rent arrears.

Repairs we charge for

- Replacing lost keys/replacement locks;
- Damage caused by forced entry after losing keys;
- Broken window glass, damaged window frames;
- Broken kitchen unit, toilet, basin or bath;
- Broken electrical fittings;
- Any restoration work after a flood, fire or where the damage was caused by your actions or negligence or by someone else living in your home;
- Any unauthorised alteration that has to be repaired;
- Vandalism, unless you can quote a Police crime number;
- Failing to clean and clear your home at the end of your tenancy, and any rechargeable repairs found on inspection.

How would I pay?

We'll tell you how much it will cost before we do the work. If you want time to pay the money, we can make an agreement to collect it in instalments. If you don't pay, we will take legal action and stop you from getting another Southway home until you have agreed to pay.

Can I refuse to have the repair?

Yes, in some cases, but not if it causes a health and safety risk or more damage to your home. You could do the work yourself – but we will check the work to ensure it is to the required standard.

Can I avoid paying for rechargeable repairs or damage by moving out?

No. If you do that we will track you down and, if necessary, use legal action to get you to pay up. You will not be allowed to get another home until you have paid the bill.

Compensation for damage

You can apply for compensation if your belongings have been damaged during a repair. We only pay compensation if we've been at fault. For example, you can't claim if a pipe bursts and the water immediately damages a carpet - but you might be able to claim if you reported a leaking pipe straightaway, and there is extra damage because we didn't arrive within our promised timescales.

Claiming compensation

We'll deal with applications for compensation quickly. We'll visit you to investigate and find out if we are at fault. Some questions to ask yourself if you're planning to claim:

- Did you report the repair straightaway?
- Was someone at home when we came to do it?
- Did the repair worker take care to avoid damage?
- Have you retained any damaged items as evidence?

If you think you may be entitled to compensation, apply for it.

Get covered!

The best way to have peace of mind about your belongings is to get good household contents insurance. Some tenants think we automatically insure furniture, possessions and decorations, but we don't - and you could be left with unexpected bills if damage is done. Our weekly-paid, low cost insurance scheme makes it easy for you to get covered. Call us on 0161 448 4200 or find out more online.

Doing your own home improvements

Your Tenancy Agreement gives you the legal right to make improvements to your home as long as you get our agreement first.

We welcome tenants improving their homes.

We will only say no if there is a good reason, for example, if the work affects your neighbours or is unsafe.

Some examples of alterations you may wish to make:

- Forming a driveway for a car;
- Building a garage/car port;
- Putting up a garden shed/greenhouse;
- Altering windows or doors;
- Extending central heating;
- Installing a new kitchen or bathroom;
- Removing internal walls;
- Fitting a satellite dish or TV aerial;
- Fitting laminated or fixed vinyl flooring.

How to get our agreement.

Call us for a form. Fill it in and send it to us at least 28 days before you plan to start work.

We will then visit you at home to check the proposed work and assess its likely effect on the property and on other people.

Depending on what you want to do, you might need planning permission and building control approval from Manchester City Council. You will definitely need to get permission and approval to put up a new building or extension.

Do not start work until you have got all the permissions and approvals you need – you could end up having to put it all back again!

11 Gas safety checks

Keeping you safe, keeping you warm

As a Southway tenant, you get a FREE service and safety check of your gas equipment and smoke alarms. And it's not just a one-off -- we come round every year to do this vital work.

This FREE gas check isn't optional – the law says that, as your landlord, we must check every home every year, and your tenancy agreement says that you must let us in to do this. If you do not let us do this, we have to take legal action to enter the property, and you risk a fine of over £700 – the cost of us going to Court and gaining entry to your home.

We have to do the safety checks - by law

Every year, around 30 people die from breathing carbon monoxide fumes from faulty gas appliances, and many more end up in hospital. We do not want this to happen to you.

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer – it has no taste or smell. The best way to make sure that you and your family are not at risk from it is to let us check and service the gas appliances in your home regularly.

What you need to do

We use Gas Safe Registered gas safety contractors, and their fully-qualified gas engineers will give your home expert treatment. This will help to keep your heating bills down, and give you peace of mind too. All of their workers carry photo identification cards.

Please ALWAYS ask for ID before you let anyone into your home.

They will service all your gas appliances and smoke alarms to check that they are operating safely. You must make sure that there is gas

available at your home at the time of the appointment.

If you buy your own gas appliances, they must be fitted by a Gas Safe Registered contractor, and you should have proof of this with the relevant gas certificate given to you by the contractor (a CP12 certificate). We will service gas appliances you own - apart from your gas cooker. Although we will check the cooker at the time to ensure that it is safe for you to use, you must make your own arrangements for it to be serviced.

When will I get my free check?

We will write to you each year with details of an appointment so that this essential service can be carried out. **If you keep the first appointment, or keep a re-arranged more convenient first appointment, we'll enter you into a monthly free prize draw to win £100.**



12 Asbestos in the home

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a special material that was widely used for its fire resistant and insulation qualities in the construction of buildings up to the 1980s.

Why is it harmful?

If asbestos fibres are inhaled they can cause harmful diseases, often producing symptoms that can only be seen after many years. Because of the delay in symptoms appearing, the possible scale of the health risk only became known after asbestos had been widely used and many people had already been exposed.

Asbestos products only pose a risk to Southway residents when they are damaged and release asbestos fibres into the air. Most asbestos products cause no risk to health whilst they remain in good condition and are undisturbed.

Where might I find asbestos in my home?

While there may be asbestos products in your home, they present very little risk because they are in good condition and there's little chance of accidental damage. We won't normally remove undamaged asbestos products if they present no risk to you or other residents.

You might find asbestos in these common building materials:

- Thermal insulation lagging around pipes and boilers;
- Linings for walls, ceilings and doors;
- Roofing tiles and felt;
- Some types of flooring materials;
- Decorative textured coatings, usually used before 1990;
- Bath panels;
- Boarding and gaskets within electrical mains fuse cupboards;

- Asbestos cement products compressed into flat or corrugated sheets, typically used as roofing and wall cladding on garages and sheds;
- Other asbestos cement products including gutters, rainwater pipes, water tanks and flues.

What precautions should I take?

If you have been told there is some material containing asbestos in your home, you should avoid damaging it in any way. Don't carry out any work that involves drilling, sawing, sanding or cutting into it that may release fibres into the air.

If you are concerned about any material in your home, always treat it as if it does contain asbestos, until we tell you otherwise.

Never handle any suspect material, or try to remove or get rid of it yourself. This is our responsibility and we will employ licensed and experienced contractors to remove and dispose of it safely.

If you're in any doubt, please call us on 0161 448 4200.

Can I do any DIY?

It is really important that you don't make any alterations or improvements to your home, other than cleaning and basic decorating, without obtaining our permission first.

We may not give you permission if there is a chance of you removing or damaging any materials containing asbestos.

Our commitment to managing asbestos

We already have a lot of information on the location of asbestos in Southway homes. We are undertaking a survey of all our homes to record where the materials containing asbestos are. This will help us to safeguard the health of residents and building contractors, and make sure there is no accidental release of asbestos fibres during improvements or repairs.

Remember - we won't normally remove undamaged asbestos products. The safest way of dealing with damaged asbestos may be to leave it in place, and to seal it, to prevent the release of fibres.



13 Protect your family from fire

Most fires in the home start by accident – and once a fire starts, it can spread quickly and easily. If a fire does break out in your home you should **get out, stay out and call 999**. Don't try to tackle it yourself.

Prevention

Here are a few basic steps you can follow to prevent fires from starting in the first place.

Chip pan fires

Chip pan fires cause more fire-related injuries in the home than anything else. They often start when the fat overheats or spills onto the cooker.

- Never fill the pan more than one third full with fat or oil;
- Never leave the pan alone with the heat on - not even for a second;
- Dry chips before putting them in the pan;
- Never put the chips in the pan if the oil starts smoking – turn the heat off to let it cool down;
- If your chip pan catches fire - don't panic. Don't move the pan;
- Turn off the heat if you can, but don't reach over the pan to get to the controls;
- NEVER throw water or use a fire extinguisher on the fire;
- If you can, drape a damp cloth or towel, or something like a heavy bread board or tray over the pan to smother the flames.
- **Leave the pan to cool down for at least half an hour**
- If you can't control the fire yourself, close the kitchen door, and get everyone out of the house;
- Dial 999 and don't go back inside until the Fire Service tells you it's safe to do so.

Kitchen fires

Over half of all accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen – and nearly all of these involve the cooker.

- Never hang tea towels on the cooker;
- Never leave the cooker alone when it is switched on;
- Make sure the cooker is turned off when you have finished using it;
- Keep electrical leads from other appliances, like kettles or toasters, away from the cooker;
- Don't let fat and grease build up on the cooker, especially in the grill pan;
- Never leave children in the kitchen unsupervised.

Smoking

Cigarettes, lighters and matches are the biggest killers in accidental fires in the home. Every three days, someone in the UK dies because of a cigarette fire.

- Never smoke in bed;
- Always use a sturdy ashtray;
- Never leave a lit cigarette unattended;
- Take extra care when you're tired or when you've been drinking;
- **Keep matches and lighters away from children.**



Candles

Candles are popular, but they have exposed flames which can cause a fire if you are not careful.

- Place candles on a flat, stable and heat-resistant surface;
- Use a proper candleholder, and make sure the candle fits firmly inside it;
- Leave plenty of space above and around the flame;
- Keep candles away from draughts, curtains, furniture and materials;
- Never put candles on polished surfaces like televisions;
- Never leave candles unattended or go to sleep when they are lit;
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets;
- Use a metal spoon to put the candle out. Let the candle cool down before you move it.

Before you go to bed

Many fires in the home start at night – so think about your bedtime fire safety routine to prevent these fires. Remember to:

- Turn off and unplug all electrical appliances that aren't designed to stay on;
- Make sure you put all cigarettes or pipes out safely;
- Never smoke in bed;
- Switch off portable heaters;
- Close the doors to all rooms.

Electrics and wiring

Following these simple rules will help to prevent electrical equipment starting fires in your home:

- At night, turn off and unplug all electrical appliances except those that are meant to be permanently switched on (like videos and fridges);
- Make sure your electrical appliances have the right fuse. Use 3amp fuses for equipment up to 720 watts, and 13amp fuses for equipment over 720 watts;
- Avoid multi-way adaptors. One plug, one socket is best;
- Don't run extension leads or cables under carpets;
- Look out for warning signs of dangerous wiring, like:
 - Hot plugs and sockets;
 - Fuses that blow for no obvious reason;
 - Lights that flicker;
 - Brown scorch marks on sockets and plugs.

If you see any of these warning signs, get in touch with us.



If a fire starts

If a fire starts in your home, you might only have a short time to get out.

Don't panic. Tell everybody else, then **get out, stay out and dial 999**.

If fire is blocking your escape, this important advice will help to keep you and your family safe:

- If you can, close the door of the room where the fire is, and close all the doors behind you as you leave. This will help to slow down the spread of fire and smoke;
- Don't waste time trying to pick up valuables or possessions;
- Never open a door unless you have to escape through it. If you have to open a door, use the back of your hand to touch it first. If it's warm, don't open it;
- If you can't get out, go into a room and close the door. Use towels, sheets or clothes to block any gaps under the door to help stop smoke spreading into the room;
- Go to the window and shout for attention. Ask people to dial 999;
- If the room gets smoky, stay close to the floor. It's easier to breathe there because smoke rises;
- If you are on the first floor and in danger, drop bedding to the ground to cushion your drop from the window. Get out of the window feet first, and lower yourself down as far as you can, before you let go.

Smoke alarms

A good quality British standard smoke alarm could save your life. In fact, you're twice as likely to die in a fire at home if you haven't got one. It's the easiest way to alert you to a fire in the home, giving you precious time to escape. They're cheap and easy to fit – and there's no excuse for not having one.

FREE fire safety check and smoke alarm

The Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service offer a FREE 'home fire risk assessment' service to every home in the area - making sure that you have access to a quality smoke alarm and up-to-date fire safety advice.

During the assessment, fire service staff will tell you how to spot potential risks and how to prevent them, and will help you work out an escape plan in case a fire does break out. If you already have a smoke alarm, they'll test it - and if you don't, they'll fit a free one.

To book your free assessment, just call 0800 555 815 or fill in the home visit request online at www.fire.gov.uk

Are you deaf or hearing impaired?

To get your free assessment and a specially adapted smoke alarm just call the Manchester Contact Service:

Telephone - 0161 255 8250

Textphone - 0161 272 8770

If you buy your own smoke alarm:

- Get one that complies with the British Standard;
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions to fit it;
- Fit the alarm in between the living areas and the bedrooms;
- Make sure you can hear it throughout your home, especially from the bedrooms;
- Test your smoke alarm each week by using the test button;
- Change the battery every year;
- Use your vacuum to keep it free of dust.

14 Energy efficiency

Over the next five years, we plan to make sure all Southway homes are as energy efficient as possible. We will insulate them to modern standards, and service or replace boilers and heating systems to improve their efficiency. We will keep a close eye on future energy saving developments, and will make any changes we think will save energy and save you money.

In the meantime, you too can do your bit for the environment - and your purse - by following 12 free and easy steps to a more energy efficient home:

- 1 Turn down your room thermostat. You could save up to 10% from your bill by turning it down by only 1°C.
- 2 Close curtains at night to stop heat escaping through the windows.
- 3 Use low energy light bulbs, and turn off any lights that aren't needed.
- 4 Don't leave fridge / freezer doors open longer than necessary.
- 5 Always use full loads in washing machines and tumble driers. Keep the wash temperature as low as possible.
- 6 Keep lids on pans whilst cooking, and make sure you use the right size hob for the pan.
- 7 Switch it off! Don't leave any appliances, such as the television or mobile phones on standby.
- 8 Don't leave taps dripping.
- 9 Recycle as much as possible. Cans, glass, plastic bottles, garden waste and newspapers can all be recycled.
- 10 Take showers instead of baths - they use a third of the water.
- 11 Only boil as much water as you need (don't forget to cover the element if you are using an electric kettle).
- 12 Water too hot? Turn it down to 60°C / 140°F.

And remember...

If you are changing any of your electrical appliances such as washing machines, fridges, freezers, or cookers for example, look for the 'A' energy rating. This will save you even more money.

To find out more about making your home more energy efficient, call **Greater Manchester Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre free, on 0800 512 012.**

Or check online at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk



15 Hot tips for cold snaps

Freezing temperatures can burst your pipes and ruin your home. Just follow these hot tips to keep the warmth in and the plumbers out!

Be prepared in the kitchen

Find out where your stop-tap is. Here's information on where it should be, and a handy reminder chart to mark down where it is. (*Section 8, page 21*). Check that it is working properly and, if there are problems with it, let us know.

Get to grips with heating controls

Central heating thermostats and time switches can be complicated. Take a look at the advice on how to set your time switches. (*Section 9, page 23*).

Set the temperature

If you have central heating, use the thermostat to keep the temperature comfortable. During the day a good setting is between 18C and 22C. If it's very cold outside, set the heating to stay on continuously, but turn the thermostat down lower for the night. Remember, the higher the thermostat setting, the more fuel you use.



When you're away

If you've got central heating and you're away when it's cold outside, leave the heating on continuously with the thermostat right down to 6C. This will stop your pipes freezing, but it won't cost much.

If you haven't got central heating and you're going away turn the water off at the stop-tap, turning the tap clockwise. Then drain off all the cold water. This empties the pipes and cold-water tank. Then turn the immersion heater to OFF. If you have a solid fuel boiler, let the fire die out, then drain off all the hot water.

What to do if a pipe bursts

- 1 Turn the water supply off at the stopcock tap. It's probably near the kitchen sink. Turn off any gate valves from the water tank.
- 2 Turn the cold taps ON. Make sure the sink and bath plugs are out. And save some drinking water in a jug for later.
- 3 Turn the immersion heater and central heating OFF if you have them. If you have a solid fuel boiler, let the fire die out.
- 4 Turn the hot taps ON to drain out the water.
- 5 If there's water near the lights or sockets, turn the electricity off at the meter.
- 6 Catch leaks in basins and soak up water with towels to prevent water damaging your home.
- 7 Phone us on 0161 448 4200 (8am-5.30pm, Monday to Friday) you can use this number outside normal office hours if the problem is an emergency that threatens your health, safety or security.
- 8 Try to keep warm and dry. Put on extra layers of clothes until things warm up again.



16 Getting involved

Strength in numbers

As a Southway tenant, individually and along with other tenants and residents, you have knowledge, experience and opinions. You know what you want for the Southway areas. We want to give you the chance to express these ideas, and to improve and develop your local neighbourhood – because a strong, supportive community makes an area safe and desirable to live in.

You have a lot of influence as a Southway tenant. As a housing association, we don't make decisions that will affect you and other tenants until we have heard what you have to say. As we can't speak to every single tenant on every issue, we look to the ones who have a united front – like the ones listed below.

Tenant and Resident Associations (TAs & RAs)

There are six tenant and resident associations in the Southway area, right now - all independently serving the tenants, leaseholders and homeowners in their local communities.

They are run by volunteers, and open to everyone in the area they cover. Some groups focus only on local housing issues, while others also get involved in wider community issues that affect everyone.

Whatever the focus of your local group, it's a fantastic way for tenants and residents to have a

collective voice, arrange social events and build a great community spirit in your area.

If you would like to get involved with your local TA or RA, or maybe just speak to them for advice – call them on the numbers listed here.

Arrowfield and Hough End Community Action Group

07535 458 801

Burnage North TA Mavis Tweeddale 0161 431 4367

Burnage South TA Joan Taylor – 0161 975 0947

Ladybarn Estate RA

c/o Southway Customer Involvement Team
0161 448 4303

Old Moat RA

c/o Southway Customer Involvement Team
0161 448 4303

West Didsbury Estate RA

c/o Southway Customer Involvement Team –
0161 448 4229



If there are no groups in your area, we can help you set up and run a tenant and resident group. We can provide advice, support and training as well as grant funding.

Our in-house groups

We're always looking at new ways and levels of tenant involvement that let you influence the way we operate the service – things like focus groups, online forums and service improvement groups. There are lots of areas of Southway's business that you might be interested in – just think about the things that matter to you. We can set up groups that discuss and explore all kinds of things - like repairs, equality and diversity (this means making sure that everybody has fair and equal treatment, as well as being aware of any special needs), rehousing, home improvements, antisocial behaviour, the local environment and even tenant involvement. The decisions made in these groups will help to change the way we and all our customers do things, for the better.

Tell us if you're interested in joining or starting a group. You wouldn't be expected to go to every meeting - you'd be in control of the time and level of commitment you want to give. Just call us on 0161 448 4229 for a chat, and we'll find a way that you can help to shape the service.

Southway Consultative Group

The Southway Consultative Group has two resident members from each tenants' association, two local Councillors, representatives from Southway's Management Team and other Southway staff. The group meets every month to look at our standards and policies. Copies of the minutes go to the Southway Board – you can read them on our website. You're welcome to come along and watch what happens at these meetings. Just call us on 0161 448 4229 if you'd like to get involved.

Surveys

Some people want to have their say, without getting really involved. We know that life can

be busy with work and family, but you still want your views heard.

So, from time to time we'll send you a short survey form, to ask what you think about certain areas of our service. The survey will always be completely confidential and we will always give you a freepost reply envelope to send it back.

Resident mystery shoppers

These residents go undercover to check that the services we provide meet the standards that we expect and you deserve. They get full training, and can put in as much, or as little, time as they have to spare. We're always looking for new mystery shoppers! To find out more, call us on 0161 448 4229.

Residents' conferences

Every year we hold a residents' conference. All our tenants are invited. At these events we listen to what you have to say, and let you know how we are doing and what has changed over the last 12 months.

The conference is usually held in April, and is advertised in our newsletter - Southway Stories. Look out for the Spring edition and then book your place. Or if you want to know more now, give us a call on 0161 448 4229.

If you are interested, let us know and we will add you to our mailing list and invite you to the next Panel meeting.



17 Everybody needs good neighbours

Everyone wants to live next to a good neighbour - someone who's considerate and respectful of you and your family. It is so much better to live in a neighbourhood where people are civil and polite to each other, and we support all tenants who live this way.

Thankfully, most of us do have good neighbours, and don't think twice about it. But there are a handful of people who don't. That is unfair to all those who are doing their best to think of others, as well as themselves, in their daily activities.

We want to put a stop to inconsiderate behaviour on our estates. The Southway Tenancy Agreements have a section that reminds people that they are responsible for their own actions, and those of their family members, friends and visitors, in and around their home and in the neighbourhood. We deal firmly with antisocial tenants – and persistent 'nuisance neighbours' can even lose their homes.

We don't want things to get to that stage. So we have created a list of helpful reminder tips on how to be a good neighbour. Of course, we don't expect people to live in fear of making noise or having fun at home – these are just sensible guidelines, to keep harmony in your home and neighbourhood.

Some neighbourly advice

Around the house

You might be behind closed doors, but you'd be surprised at how far your noise can travel. It's impossible to live without making some noise, but just keep an eye on the levels in your house – these tips should keep it calm:

- Don't shout, swear or scream loudly;
- If you don't have carpets, wear slippers to soften your stamp;
- Don't let children run up and down the stairs.

- Close your doors quietly;
- Try to do washing and Hoovering, or using any noisy machinery, only between 9am and 9pm;
- Control your dogs' barking, and keep them within your boundaries;
- Tell your neighbours if you're planning to have a party.

Stereo and TVs

It's one of the most common complaints. There's nothing more annoying than hearing someone else's overloud TV or stereo, when you want a bit of quiet. Take this advice to keep the peace with your neighbours:

- Limit the volume on your TV or stereo, especially in the evening;
- Don't put your TV or speakers on, or right next to, the walls;
- Don't play loud music inside when you're outside;
- Limit the volume if your stereo is outside.

In the garden

We want you to enjoy your garden, yard or balcony - but be aware that your neighbours can often hear and see what happens there. Take pride in your outside spaces and follow these golden rules:

- Avoid having very large noisy parties;
- Consider the volume of music and also the smoke fumes if you're having a BBQ;
- Don't let your garden become an eyesore.

Next to your home

Outside your home is just as important as inside. It says everything about the state of your home and neighbourhood. Remember these tips to keep it looking and feeling nice for you and your neighbours:

- Park cars so they don't block your neighbours' driveways;
- Put your bins back in your courtyard or grounds after they've been emptied;
- Put out and take in your neighbours' bins if they are away from home;
- Don't let the outside of your home become an eyesore – keep it clear and tidy;
- Report any graffiti, dumped rubbish and vandalism on 0161 954 9000.

Mediation: we can work it out

If you do have a problem with your neighbours, it's always best to work it out before things get too difficult. But it can be hard to talk to neighbours if you've got an issue with them. You just want a quiet life - and to get things sorted.

That's where Mediation Services comes in. They can help to solve disputes with neighbours - and they have a 97% success rate to prove it.

It's a step-by-step process where independent experts help find a solution that suits everyone. Mediators listen to both points of view – they will talk to both sides separately. They don't judge people as 'right' or 'wrong'. The mediators are all volunteers who live or work locally. They don't take sides, and the service is FREE for the people in dispute.

When mediation works and when it doesn't

Mediation works well if you're more interested in a solution than in blaming your neighbours. But mediation won't be right for you if threats, violence, severe mental illness, or drug or alcohol problems are involved, or where legal action is being taken. For help with serious antisocial behaviour like this, you should call us on 0161 448 4200 immediately.

How to get in touch

Call Mediation Services on 0161 908 0392 (there's a 24-hour answer phone outside office hours) or write to them at:

Mediation Services (PSS)

The Workshop

Abraham Moss Centre
Crescent Road, Crumpsall,
MANCHESTER M8 5UF

Or if you'd prefer, you could call us on 0161 448 4200 and we can contact them for you.

Homewatch

If you're concerned about keeping your neighbourhood safe why not set up a Homewatch scheme? You and your neighbours agree to keep an eye out for suspicious activity, and to be vigilant about strangers in your area. To find out how to set up a scheme, call 0161 856 6087.

Of course, being a good neighbour is not only about being sure that you are not causing nuisance to others. If you are aware of anybody who is elderly, alone or has special problems why not introduce yourself? You can make a real difference to your neighbourhood if you keep a caring eye out for needy neighbours, and offer what help and assistance you can. If there are problems where you think we may be able to help, just let us know.



18 How does your garden grow?

Lots of our tenants have beautiful gardens that are a credit to them and to the estates they live on. Everyone likes to see a well kept garden, and Southway tenants have some of the best in Manchester. Thanks to all of you who help to keep the area green and attractive in this way.

Even if you don't have the greenest fingers on your estate, your Tenancy Agreement still makes you responsible for keeping your garden, including any paved areas in it, in good shape. We don't expect people to be out pruning shrubs and planting bulbs every other week, but we do expect a certain level of care.

Section 3.16 in your Tenancy Agreement says that, at the most basic level, you must keep your garden and paved areas clean, neat and tidy. This includes cutting the grass and trimming hedges regularly, and keeping the area free from rubbish and unwanted household items.

Can't do it?

We know it can be hard for some of you to keep on top of your gardens. You might be elderly, in poor health or have an impairment. If you are physically unable to do it yourself and you can't afford to pay a gardener, and there is nobody who lives with you, or available to you who might reasonably be expected to help, we may be able to help instead.

You can apply for help by filling in a form online, at www.southwayhousing.co.uk (under 'at your service') or you can call us on 0161 448 4200 and we will send you a concessionary gardening application form. When your Neighbourhood Environment Officer receives the application form, we will carry out checks to confirm that the information is accurate. Your Neighbourhood Environment Officer will then write to you with a decision, and arrange a visit to your home within 10 working days. He or she will let you know if and what we can do to help, and when we can do it.

Won't do it?

If your garden is overgrown, or littered with unsightly rubbish and there is no good reason why you can't sort it out yourself, despite our requests, we will arrange to clear it for you. We will not allow it to continue to spoil the look of the estate for everybody else. We will then charge you, fairly, for the cost of the work plus an admin fee, and you will be expected to pay this charge.

Report a problem with another garden

If you see a garden that's overgrown, or has any rubbish dumped in it, please tell us. It's not fair on the people who look after their gardens, and make the effort to keep their own part of the estate looking clean and tidy. We treat this kind of antisocial behaviour seriously. You can fill in a short online form at www.southwayhousing.co.uk (under 'at your service')

Get rid of large items of household rubbish for FREE!

The Council run a FREE service for Southway tenants - removing larger unwanted items like beds, cookers, microwaves, furniture, fridges, sofas and garden waste.

Call them at Environmental "On Call" on 0161 954 9000 to arrange a specific pick-up point and date. They usually collect bulky items within ten working days.

19 Older and disabled tenants

We want to make sure that everyone has the support they need to enjoy life as a Southway tenant.

We make sure that older and disabled tenants have easy access to our services by:

- Listening to, understanding and meeting the different needs of older and disabled tenants;
- Creating and strengthening partnerships with agencies and organisations who can offer specialist support to our tenants.

At your service!

We know that access is all-important for our older and disabled tenants, so we've made sure that all areas of our services are open and easy to reach. Here are just a few things that we do to make it easier for tenants to get the Southway service.

Forms and leaflets for visually impaired tenants

If you, or someone you know has reduced, or no vision, you can ask for large print, Braille or CD versions of documents such as statements and leaflets. If you need any of these, contact us on 0161 448 4200.

Alternative methods to contact us if you are deaf or hard of hearing

You can talk to us by textphone on 0161 448 4349. We provide signers, lip speakers and a fax service. We also have a loop hearing system at our reception counter at Aspen House. Just ask when you arrive.

www.southwayhousing.co.uk - AAA

Absolutely the best!

We've made sure that you won't miss the benefits of using the Southway website because of a visual impairment, because you're older or because you are not a strong reader.

Our website has got the triple-A logo – the top mark a website can get for accessibility. This rating means you're sure to understand our site, find your way around it, have your say and do all the things that used to mean visiting an office or writing out and posting long paper forms.

You can even listen to the pages instead of reading them, using the Browsealoud system on our website. You can also make the writing on the website bigger or smaller, to suit your eyesight.

Access all areas...

Aspen House, our building, has an access ramp, an automatic door, wide doorways and toilets for disabled people. If it's easier for you, we are happy to visit you at home to deal with any housing query, including rehousing and medical assessment.

You could also take advantage of our interactive online web services, so you can keep in contact from the comfort of your own home.

Need a little help from us?

We can help you with things like...

Setting up and running your home

...turning on gas, electricity and water, sorting out rent and bills, managing money and claiming benefits, and arranging insurance and security.

Making the most of your neighbourhood

...finding shops and services, looking for jobs, training or courses, and making use of your free time.

Getting help from other places

...talking about problems; getting expert advice on things like debt, mental health, drugs or

alcohol; contacting social services or other organisations.

Our aim is to help you get on your feet and live independently - so, after a time, you won't need that kind of support from us any more. But, of course, you can always come back if you need help in the future.

If you, or someone you know, needs support like this, please get in touch.

Retirement housing (Sheltered housing)

If you're over 60 and looking for a home that gives you comfort, support and security, we might be able to help. We have a small selection of apartments designed especially for older people, offering independent living with security and peace of mind offering:



- your own front door, bathroom and kitchen, and one or two bedrooms;
- affordable rent;
- trained staff on hand to help, if you ever need it;
- the company of others when you want it, and privacy when you don't;
- referrals to other supportive agencies, if you need them;
- activities and events, if you want to get involved;
- local shops and facilities with good public transport;

- around-the-clock call system that goes straight to a support team.

Want to find out more? Just contact us (*See Section 3, page 6*) and we can talk through your options.

Changes to your home for independent living

We know that many older and disabled tenants want to live as independently as possible, without relying on relatives or a carer to help them. So we work with Manchester Equipment & Adaptations Partnership to provide free services that can help you, such as:

● Extra equipment

Free daily living equipment to make life easier and give you more independence – things like walking frames, bath seats or special kitchen/cooking equipment.

It doesn't matter how old you are, or what your condition is, and you can keep the equipment for as long as you need it. Talk to us as soon as you need help (*See Section 3, page 6*) – we can't pay for equipment you've already bought yourself, so see us first.

● Making adaptations

If we can't help by providing daily living equipment, we'll talk about you moving to a specially adapted home. If this isn't suitable, we may fit adaptations to your current home – depending on your circumstances, and the type of home you live in.

Minor adaptations, like stair-rails or grab-rails, can be done quickly. Bigger jobs, like a stairlift or level-access shower, take longer.

For more details contact the equipment and adaptations team:

Phone: 0161 255 8250

Textphone: 0161 272 8770

Fax: 0161 255 8266

To make referrals write to:
The Contact Officers
Manchester Equipment & Adaptations Partnership,
Carisbrooke Resource Centre
Wenlock Way
West Gorton
M12 5LF

Get alarmed!

If you're worried about what might happen if you fall, or have an accident, you might want to consider a "Community Alarm" – an emergency response system you can use to summon help. You wear a pendant around your neck or clipped to your clothes, with a button to press if you get into difficulties. The button rings the community alarm control centre who can call emergency services, or alert someone who holds a key to go to your home and help. If you're interested call us on 0161 448 4200 for more details.

Extra support

Manchester City Council also offers housing help and support for older people. They can give you the help you need to live independently and get you back on the right tracks. To get this service you must be able to say 'yes' to at least one of these questions...

- Do you live alone, or with someone who is elderly or disabled, or with an informal carer?
- Do you have difficulty with everyday living tasks?
- Do you find it hard to keep to your Tenancy Agreement?
- Do you feel vulnerable because of crime or antisocial behaviour?
- Do you struggle to manage your home?
- Are you socially isolated because of illness or bereavement?

What happens then?

A support worker will visit you at least once a week to assess the kind of support you need. They'll help you with things like security, home safety, paying bills, claiming benefits, keeping to your Tenancy Agreement, and maintaining a social life. They'll keep an eye on your health and welfare, and maybe call on other agencies and services for you if necessary. They can set up an emergency contact with a mobile warden service too.



Useful contacts

Money and work

Age Concern Manchester

Age Concern Manchester offer free advice on all kinds of things, like welfare benefits, finances, community care and much more. They also run a free counselling service for all older people living in Manchester.

Freephone: 0800 027 5787

Help the Aged

Help the Aged offer free advice and leaflets on benefits, financial matters and welfare rights for older people.

Seniorline: 0808 800 6565

Textphone: 0800 269 626

The Pension Service

The government's pension and benefit service, for the over-60s.

Call: 0845 606 0265

Textphone: 0845 606 0285

Getting around

Free public transport

Every Manchester resident over 60 is entitled to free bus, tram and train travel on the local transport network.

Call: 0871 200 22 33

Ring and Ride

If you struggle to use public transport, the Ring and Ride minibus service can take you door-to-door, for a very small fee.

Call: 0161 223 6575

'Places to Go' guides

GMPTE have a series of free booklets about interesting places to visit in Greater Manchester. They'll tell you how to get there on public transport and what you can do when you arrive.

Call: 0161 242 6040

Blue Badge parking

This pass allows free parking in disabled parking zones for people who are moderately to severely disabled.

Call: 0161 277 8600

Textphone: 0161 277 8602

Staying safe

Community Alarm Service

This small alarm is really handy, especially if you're not so good on your feet. It's small enough to fit on the wrist - and at the click of a button, the community alarm control room is alerted to your alarm call. Call: 0161 255 8250

Homewatch

This scheme lets neighbours work together to keep the neighbourhood safe.

Call: 0161 856 6087

Fire safety

For a free home check and advice on fire safety, call the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

Call: 0800 555 815

Greater Manchester Police

Call: 0161 872 5050

Textphone: 0161 872 6633

Emergency: 999

In the home

Utility debts advice

Get your hands on this free booklet, packed with advice on how to deal with gas, electricity and water debts.

Call: 0161 234 5678

Consumer Direct

Advice on cutting down energy bills and dealing with energy suppliers.

Call 08459 060708

Typetalk: 18001 08459 060708

Minicom: 08451 2813 84

Manchester City Council's Warm Homes grants

Free or discounted insulation and energy efficiency measures Call: 0161 234 5342

Warm Front

Apply for extra help to keep your home warm.
Call: 0800 316 6011

Winter Fuel payments

Get an annual payment towards your heating in the winter. Call: 08459 151515

Equipment and Adaptations for the home

If you have a disability, they can help out with special equipment to keep you independent at home. Call: 0161 255 8250

Social life

Age Concern's Ageing Well

Social group for the over 60s - enjoy arts and crafts, exercise, quizzes and other activities with this group. Call: 0161 437 0717

South Manchester Healthy Living Network

Connecting local people with health and community organisations. They also organise various health promotion activities.
Call: 0161 217 3667

Manchester Visitor Information Centre

Get information on things to do and places to go in and around Manchester.
Call: 0871 222 8223

Education

Learndirect

Help and advice on learning opportunities that are suited to you. Call: 0800 101 901

University of the Third Age (U3A)

Learn for pleasure with other retired and semi-retired people. Call: 0208 466 6139

City College Manchester

With plenty of interesting courses, over 25% of their students are aged over 50 - and they have two campuses in south Manchester.
Call: 0800 013 0123

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Out in the City

Active social group for older LGBT older people - organised by Age Concern. Call: 0161 833 3944

Disability

Manchester Disabled People's Access Group

Promotes best practice in access design and access standards and campaigns to improve access to buildings, transport, the environment, information and services. Call: 0161 273 5033

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People

Campaigns on a wide variety of disability issues.
Call: 0161 273 5154

Young Disabled People's Forum

Supports young disabled people to gain greater control of their life and make a smooth transition towards adult life. Call: 0161 273 8141

Breakthrough UK

Supports disabled people into employment and work-related training, and helps when disability related issues arise at work. Call: 0161 273 5412

20 Rehousing: Getting a home from Southway or another not-for-profit Housing Association

Southway homes are in big demand these days, with hundreds of people chasing each available home. So we use published criteria – rules to determine levels of housing need – and a register of people looking for rented accommodation, to decide who gets our available homes.

Most of Manchester's not-for-profit housing associations share the same rehousing register of people looking to rent in the city. You only have to register with one landlord – all the other landlords can look at this register, and your details on it, to check what they can offer you.

Are you already registered for rehousing?

You are registered for rehousing if you have:

- filled in a rehousing registration form on the internet or on paper; and
- we have confirmed your registration and given you a rehousing application number.

Who can register?

Generally, anyone over 16. However, the law says that we cannot house certain people from abroad who are subject to immigration control. If you think this may affect you, phone 0161 230 2534.

How do you join the register?

You can start your registration online at Manchester Homefinder – (www.manchesterhomefinder.org.uk). You can use the internet free at your local library.

If you don't want to use the internet, the way that you register for rehousing depends on where you live:

- if you're already a Southway tenant, or live in our area, call us on 0161 448 4200.
- if you live in the area covered by Manchester City Council AND you live in a home rented from another social landlord, contact your own landlord.

If you live outside the area covered by Manchester City Council:

- for an appointment contact 0161 230 2534;
- to apply by post contact the Council's Central Rehousing Group, PO BOX 538, Manchester M12 5FB Tel: 0161 230 2534.

What happens when you register?

1 We send you:

- a letter within 10 days confirming what you've asked for, telling you which rehousing priority group you have been placed in, and giving you a rehousing application number; and
- a registration letter every six months you remain on the register. This asks if your circumstances have changed, and whether you want to stay on the register.

2 We will take you off the register if:

- you tell us to;
- you accept a home; or
- you don't sign and reply to our six-monthly letter.

3 We promise to:

- share your details with all the housing register landlords;
- not share your details with anyone else without your permission.

4 **We update your details**, whenever they change. So you **MUST** keep us informed, straight away, of any changes that affect you or the people you're living with. You could lose the home you're after if you don't.

How do you find a home?

There's a choice of ways to look for rented homes from Southway and Manchester's other not-for-profit landlords.

- 1 You can see and apply for our available homes online.
www.manchesterhomefinder.org.uk
This list is updated at least once a week, and there are maps, area guides and pictures to help you choose.
- 2 Phone Manchester Homefinder on 0161 230 2534. They have all the details of what's available – with new homes added every day.
- 3 Pick up the weekly printed listing of available addresses – Homefinder Weekly - at convenient spots such as council offices, libraries, citizens' advice bureaux, and community groups.
- 4 Many of the not-for-profit landlords that use the Manchester Housing Register have their own websites of available homes.
- 5 It is a good idea to check the Homefinder results page, to see the priority group and queue dates – the date that determines your position on the priority queues - of those who have already been offered tenancies of available homes. You can check these out against your own group and queue date.

We can only offer properties in strict queue date order.

Swap your home

You could find somewhere much more quickly by exchanging your home with another tenant . This could be in the Manchester area or with other tenants around the country.

Homeswap is a mutual exchange system and is **FREE** to Southway tenants. You can access the system online by going to www.homeswapper.co.uk

If you have no internet access, you can contact us on 448 4200 and we'll be able to access the system for you.

How we decide who CANNOT get a home

Southway – and Manchester's other not-for-profit landlords – do not want their homes to go to people who might cause problems for their new community.

This is why we ask for references from all new applicants. However, some applicants with a poor previous record may not be considered for a Southway home.

We use strict, but fair rules to decide who won't get our homes. We apply these rules carefully to each case, explaining our reasons and telling people how to put things right so they might be able to be considered for rehousing in future.

This could apply if you or anyone in your household:

- has a Court order or possession order against them for rent arrears, antisocial behaviour or damaging property;
- owes a landlord rent or another debt, and there is no agreement to pay off the money, or an agreement was made but has not been kept;
- has broken a tenancy agreement, and the problem has not been sorted out;
- has been violent, threatening or disrupted neighbours' lives; or
- has committed an offence against the community.

21 Owning your own home

We can give most Southway tenants the opportunity to buy their home. Over the years, hundreds of people in the area have taken advantage of the benefits of discounted home ownership schemes.

You must meet certain conditions to be able to do this. For example – you must have been a tenant for a certain length of time, and not live in ‘specialist’ housing, e.g. sheltered homes for older people, or property with special adaptations for a disabled resident.

There are two types of discounted home ownership schemes available from Southway – they are Right to Buy and Right to Acquire. Other home ownership schemes are available through Plumlife at www.plumlife.co.uk

If you transferred from the City Council to Southway, you will probably already have the legal preserved Right to Buy. If you became a Southway tenant after the transfer from the City Council, you will get the legal Right to Acquire once you become an assured Southway tenant after a certain amount of time. (See page 53 under ‘the right to acquire’)

The preserved Right to Buy

If you were previously a secure tenant of Manchester City Council, and you became an assured tenant because your home was transferred to us, you may have the preserved Right to Buy.

Your Tenancy Agreement gives you the right to buy if you have been a tenant with the City Council, Southway or another public sector landlord (like another council or housing association) - or lived in armed forces accommodation for a certain amount of time. You can apply to buy your home after two years if you became a tenant before 18th January 2005, or after five years if you became a tenant on or after 18th January 2005.

If you buy your home, and later want to sell it, there are special rules (*see below*) that will apply to the repayment of the discount on the purchase price you were charged when you bought your home.

When you do not have the preserved right to buy

You do not have the Right to Buy if:

- Your home is rented in relation to your employment;
- The Courts have issued a possession order for you to leave your home;
- You have filed, or are about to file for bankruptcy; or
- You live in specialist housing for older or disabled people.

If you do have the preserved Right to Buy

You can buy your home at a discount price below its market value - the going rate at that time.

In general, the longer you have been a tenant, the bigger the discount will be. If you live in a house, you will get between 32 percent and 60 percent off the market value of your home. And if you live in a flat, you would expect a discount of between 44 percent and 70 percent of the market value. **The maximum discount you can get on any property is £26,000.**

- If you buy your home, you can sell it in the future - but if you do this within a certain time, you will have to pay back some, or all of the discount. If you applied to buy your home before 18th January 2005, you’d have to wait three years from the purchase date before you could sell it without paying back any of the

discount. If you applied to buy your home on or after that date, you'd have to wait five years before you could sell it without paying back any of the discount.

Before 18th January 2005 - if sold within:

- One year, all discount is repayable;
- Two years, two thirds is repayable;
- Three years, one third is repayable.

After three complete years, no repayment is required.

From 18th January 2005 - if sold within:

- One year, all discount is repayable;
- Two years, four fifths is repayable;
- Three years, three fifths is repayable;
- Four years, two fifths is repayable;
- Five years, one fifth is repayable.

After five complete years, no repayment is required.

The right to acquire

People who became Southway tenants after the transfer from Manchester City Council in November 2007 may have the Right to Acquire. Your Tenancy Agreement gives you the legal right to acquire if you have been a tenant with the City Council, Southway or another public sector landlord (like another council or housing association) - or lived in armed forces accommodation for a certain amount of time. If you became a tenant before 18th January 2005, it's a two year wait. If you became a tenant on or after that date, it's five years.

When you do not have the Right to Acquire

You do not have the Right to Acquire if:

- Your home is rented in relation to your employment;
- The Courts have issued a possession order for you to leave your home;
- You have filed, or are about to file for bankruptcy; or
- You live in specialist housing for older or disabled people.

If you have the right to acquire

You can buy your home at a discount price of £10,000 below its market value - the going rate at that time.

The maximum discount you can get is 50 percent of the value of the property. If you decide to sell your home within five years of buying it, or it is repossessed by your mortgage lender during that time, you will have to repay some, or all, of the discount. The amount you'd have to pay back depends on how soon this happens.

If sold within:

- One year, 100% is repayable;
- Two years, 80% is repayable;
- Three years, 60% is repayable;
- Four years, 40% is repayable;
- Five years, 20% is repayable.

After five complete years, no repayment is required.

Common questions

Can I buy my home with other family members?

You can buy your home with up to three members of your family, but we will need to check to make sure they have been living with you for more than one year – and that the property you want to buy is also their only or main home.

Can other family members buy my home on my behalf?

You can certainly ask them to help out with finances, if you want the purchase to be in your name only. If your family members are helping financially, and want their names on the purchase too, they must have lived with you for at least one year.

What if I'm a joint tenant, but only one of us wants to buy?

If one or more joint tenant doesn't want to buy, they will need to sign a form, agreeing that the other tenant can buy the property in his or her sole name.

Think before you buy

Owning your own home has its advantages and disadvantages. When you are looking at the difference between renting and buying, don't just look at the weekly payments. There are additional costs.

Renting a Southway home includes things like buildings insurance, and a free repairs service. If you were to buy your home, you would have to pay for these things yourself.

Buying your home is a major financial commitment and you should make sure that you receive advice from reputable companies. If you have decided to buy your home using the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire schemes, we will contact you to discuss your application. At this point you can ask us any questions you may have, and we will give you any advice we think you may need.

If you are thinking of buying your home, be extremely careful of Right to Buy sales people, from private companies, who may call on you and try to get you to sign "deals" on your doorstep. Do not sign, or agree to anything without first obtaining independent financial advice from a bank or building society. We can advise you on the way to do this, so get in touch with us if you're interested in buying.

How to do it

Buying your home can be a fairly long and complicated process – but we will help you to do it. We can give you free advice and information to get you started and to help you on your way, including:

- Getting a mortgage or a home purchase partnership (for Muslims);
- Finding the right legal and independent financial advice;
- Purchasing and living in a leaseholder property, such as our cottage flat homes;
- Providing the right application forms, and helping you to fill them in.

Just call us on 0161 448 4224 and we'll talk through your options.

Although we can point you in the right direction, we cannot give you legal or financial advice. You will need a solicitor and an independent financial advisor for this – and you will have to pay for their services.



22 Moving home

Moving home can be stressful at the best of times. To make the process easier, we have prepared a list of things you will need to do when you move home.

Four weeks' notice

You need to give us at least four weeks' notice in writing, before we can end your tenancy. If you give us less than four weeks' notice, we still have the right to claim the full four weeks' rent. Your notice period must end on a Monday and, when you notify us, you'll need to tell us your name(s), your current address and your new address.

You can tell us that you're leaving in one of four easy ways:

- By phoning Southway Connect on 0161 448 4200;
- By email at (info@southwayhousing.co.uk);
- In the post to Aspen House, 825 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury M20 2SN;
- Online at www.southwayhousing.co.uk

Ending a joint tenancy

If you have a joint tenancy, any joint tenant can end the tenancy by giving us at least four weeks' notice. By law, we do not have to allow other joint tenants to stay in the home – it all depends on your circumstances, and whether the property could be more suitable for another type of family or household. However, we will never ask any other joint tenants to move home without good reason.

Handing in your keys

You must return every set of house keys no later than 12 noon on the Monday of your tenancy end date. If you do not return every set of keys, you run the risk of paying for a full change of locks. You will be given a receipt for the keys, which you should keep as your proof of having correctly ended your tenancy.

Paying your rent

Unless you've made a special arrangement with us to pay off any arrears, all your rent payments must be up-to-date. If you are struggling to pay your rent, get in touch with us as soon as you can. We will do what we can to help you.

Leaving your home clean and tidy

Please leave the property and its outside spaces clean and tidy, ready for the next person to move in. We expect some reasonable wear and tear in the house, but you are responsible for any damage caused by your actions or neglect – including damage caused by family members and visitors. If you have removed any original internal fittings, you must replace them with fittings of the same quality. If you don't, we'll have to charge you for replacing them.

Removing your belongings

It is your responsibility to remove all your furniture, floor coverings and belongings from the property before you hand in your keys and end your tenancy. If you do not do this, we will have to charge you for their removal. Please don't dump anything outside, as we will have to charge you for its removal and disposal. The Council will pick up any unwanted household goods – chairs, settees, fridges, cookers etc – for no charge. Just call them on 0161 954 9000 to tell them what you want them to move and to arrange a collection date. And, if your unwanted items are in really good condition, why not take them to your local charity shop?

Home improvements

If you have made fixed home improvements to your home, they will usually become our property.

We may be able to give you an allowance for any major improvements that you've made, like putting in a shower or installing central heating. Just let us know, when you're handing in your notice.

Benefits and utilities

If you claim Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit, remember to give your new address and moving date to the Benefits Service and the Council Tax office. You do not want to lose out on any benefit to which you are entitled.

Before you leave, remember to take final readings from your gas and electricity meters, telling your suppliers the exact date that you're moving. Make sure all water taps are turned off, and turn the mains water off at your stop-tap.

Checklist for moving home

I have...

- ☐ Given Southway Housing four weeks' notice in writing.
- ☐ Arranged mail redirection (get a form from your Post Office).
- ☐ Asked friends or a removal firm to help me move.
- ☐ Cancelled milk and paper deliveries.
- ☐ Arranged for the removal of unwanted bulky items.
- ☐ Taken final meter readings and told my gas, water and electricity suppliers.
- ☐ Repaired, cleared and cleaned the house, inside and out.
- ☐ Handed all my keys in to Southway Housing and collected the receipt.
- ☐ Cancelled contents insurance.
- ☐ Sent my new address to:
 - ☐ Benefits office
 - ☐ Council Tax office
 - ☐ Southway Housing Trust
 - ☐ Bank or building society
 - ☐ My employer
 - ☐ The children's school
 - ☐ Insurance companies
 - ☐ DVLA (for car owners)
 - ☐ Doctors and dentist



23 Antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour can cause real misery for people who just want to get on with their lives. It comes in all shapes and forms, and ranges from serious acts of violence, hate crime and harassment, to everyday incidents like nuisance caused by noisy dogs, or eyesores such as overgrown gardens.

Whatever the problem, we take all complaints of antisocial behaviour seriously – and we take swift action to stop it.

Are you in danger?

If you're in immediate danger or you're being threatened with violence or abuse, call the police on 999. Then, once you have had their help, let us know what has happened.

First steps

We'll contact you soon after you've reported the problem to us, to let you know that we're looking into the case.

We can sort out obvious problems fairly easily. For example, if you tell us about a rubbish-filled garden, we'll just go round and check. And we'll tell the other person to clean it up, and take action against them if they don't.

But most cases aren't as easy as this. If the anti-social behaviour is not that obvious, or it's aimed directly at you (like abuse or harassment), we will need to talk to you before we start an investigation.

In most cases, we'll need to meet you to talk about the problem. We can do this wherever is best for you - at home, in our office or somewhere else. We'll speak to other people in the household who have been affected, as well.

Then we'll get an action plan together, listing what you should do, and what we will do to get the problem sorted out. We'll give you a copy of

this action plan too. This case now becomes a partnership – we are working for you, but you have to help us by keeping to your side of the action plan.

Talk it over

If the case doesn't involve threats, violence or harassment, the action plan could include talking the problem through with the other person. Sometimes a neighbour just needs to know that his or her behaviour has upset you.

But if you have tried this, and the other person is unreasonable, just walk away. Don't get involved in an argument. If you feel uneasy about this, we can set a meeting up for you, and we can be there to help you talk through the problem together.

Mediation Services

If you don't feel comfortable with this approach, there's a special service that can help solve your dispute. Mediation Services have expert advisers who can help find a solution that suits both you and your neighbours. They don't take sides, and their service is FREE for people in dispute. You do not have to meet with your problem neighbours unless you wish – the mediators will speak to them separately.

We can put you in touch with them. If you think you could use this service, please ring us on 0161 448 4200.

Getting the evidence

We can't take action against someone, just because another person has complained about them – we need evidence. The most important piece of evidence is an Incident Diary. It's a special booklet that we give you to record antisocial behaviour that you see or hear - we can show you how to fill it in.

We might need additional evidence, like photographs, video or tape recordings of the incidents happening. We can sometimes do this for you but, if the incident happens suddenly when we're not there, it may be best if you do it yourself, as well.

We might have to speak to other people who have seen the problem too – like your neighbours. It could be difficult to take the case any further without these other witnesses. Your neighbours could fill in their own Incident Diaries, as supporting evidence.

Taking action

If the evidence proves the antisocial behaviour, we will take action – and in very serious cases, we'll go straight to legal action.

But, in most situations, we'll take a step-by-step approach to try and get those responsible to change their behaviour. We will interview the perpetrators – those who are causing the nuisance or disturbance. *(You can ask us not to do this, but it would then be difficult to take the case further).* We will tell them to change their behaviour, or they will risk having legal action taken against them. This is usually enough to solve the problem.

If the antisocial behaviour continues after a final warning – or if someone is in danger – we will start legal action straight away. We would give you more advice and information, if it ever got to that stage.

All sorted?

We want to know that you are happy with the way that we dealt with your complaint, and the way we resolved the problem.

After a couple of months, we will get in touch with you to see how things are, and ask you to fill in a short questionnaire. What you tell us will help us to monitor the way in which we deal with antisocial behaviour, and to see if there are any improvements or changes we need to make to the service.



24 Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is the abuse of someone, within a family or close relationship. It is the repeated, random and habitual use of intimidation to control another person – usually a partner, ex-partner or other family member.

The abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual. Anyone who is being forced to alter his or her behaviour, because they're frightened of the other person's reaction, is being abused.

Domestic abuse includes:

- physical or sexual abuse of you or your children;
- threatening or behaving badly to you or your children;
- doing things to make you feel fearful or frightened;
- destroying your property and possessions;
- insisting on knowing where you are all the time;
- making sure you haven't got access to money;
- separating you from friends or family.

Emotional abuse can be just as harmful as physical abuse, and the effects can last much longer. Many people still carry the emotional scars, long after the physical injuries have healed.

If you are going through any of these things, you are not on your own and you do not have to suffer in silence.

In an emergency phone 999, or get someone else to phone, immediately. Move to a safe place; avoid the kitchen and stay near a door. If in doubt, get out.

Lifeline contacts

These advisers deal with domestic abuse phone calls every day of the year. They will

always be careful and discreet - respecting your privacy, your details and your identity.

- If you're in danger or immediate threat of violence, always call 999.
- Greater Manchester Police Domestic Violence Unit
Open 24 hours, 0161 872 5050
- Manchester Women's Domestic Violence Helpline
Monday – Friday, 10am - 4pm, 0161 636 7525
- National Domestic Violence Helpline
Open 24 hours, 0808 2000 247
- Domestic Violence Outreach Team
Monday – Friday, 9am - 4pm, 0161 234 5393
- Samaritans – 0161 236 8000

Safe in your Southway home

We want you to feel safe in your home.

We can help and support you with many things, like:

- Helping you access services to make you feel safer in your home;
- Making alterations to your home so you feel safer in it;
- Getting expert help on legal action;
- Helping you find somewhere else to live.

Contact us on 0161 448 4200.

25 Enquiries, compliments and complaints

Here are the customer service standards you can expect from us when you use our service.

When you phone we will:

- Answer your call within six rings;
- Introduce ourselves;
- Deal efficiently with your query, or put you through to the right person straight away;
- Ring you back if the query is going to take a long time to sort out (e.g. more than five minutes).

When you email or write we will:

- Answer as quickly as possible, certainly in no more than ten working days and usually much sooner;
- Use plain language, and no jargon;
- Tell you what we are going to do with your query or request;
- Include full details of who has written our letter or email, and who to contact if you need more information.

When you want to speak to someone in person we will:

- Arrange an appointment at a convenient time for you – either at your home or in the office;
- Treat you politely;
- Be dressed smartly and wear a name badge;
- Arrange for a signer, a translator, or interpreter if you need one;
- Respect the privacy of your home if the meeting is there.

Our staff should serve you with courtesy and respect. We protect our staff against threats and abuse. We can refuse to serve anyone whose behaviour is offensive. We aim to treat our customers in the way in which we would wish to be treated ourselves, taking extra care if there are special needs to consider.

Happy with our service?

We'd love to know if you've received great service, or if someone has been especially polite or helpful. That way we can thank the member of staff for treating you so well. And we can also understand our customers' needs and use this information to keep improving the service for everybody.

Please fill in the form *"Happy with our Service"*. You can pick up a form from your local Southway office, call 0161 448 4200, or go online at www.southwayhousing.co.uk to make your comments.



Unhappy with our service?

To help us provide a high quality service to all our customers, we also need to know when you are not happy with the service you get. Our complaints procedure helps you tell us when things go wrong, and gives us all the information we need to put things right so that we do not make the same mistakes again.

What is a complaint?

It's when you tell us you are not happy with:

- Something that we have done for you;
- Something that we have failed to do for you, despite this having been agreed previously;
- The standard of service you have had from us;
- The way in which you have been treated by Southway staff or contractors.

Making a complaint will not affect your right to fair treatment and a good service from us.

Why we have a formal system

There are advantages for you in us having a formal complaints system:

- You know your complaint will be dealt with consistently and effectively, rather than getting lost in red tape;
- You will get a fair decision based on a recognised procedure, not the opinion of an individual;
- You know what to expect and when to expect it;
- It turns annoyance into positive action;
- It offers a solution to the problem.

There are advantages of this system for Southway Housing Trust as well – every complaint we receive gives us the chance to review our actions, and to consider how we can learn from it to improve the service to customers.

Complaints: our procedure

Our procedure is a clear step-by-step system that lays down what we must do at each stage, and tells you when we will do it.

Talk to a member of staff

Talk to someone within the group or section with which you dealt originally. Tell us why you're unhappy and what you want us to do. Very often this will sort the problem out on the spot, without the need to fill in forms or to put your complaint in writing.

If you are not happy with the response . . .

Fill in a complaints form

You can do this online, or contact us (See Section 3, page 6) for a paper form. We'll let you know that we've got your complaint within two working days. We'll investigate the problem and the relevant Head of Service will give you a full response within ten working days of receiving your form - or, if that's not possible, explain why it will take longer (although this rarely happens). The vast majority of complaints are sorted out by this stage but, if you are still not happy with what you have been told, you have the right to ask the relevant Director to review the decision made – we call this a Stage 2 Complaint.

Customer Complaints Form

You can use the internet to fill in this form www.southwayhousing.co.uk or email details to connect2southway@southwayhousing.co.uk

What is a complaint?
When you tell us you're not happy because of ...

- the standard of service you have received from Southway; or
- our failure to do something we agreed to do; or
- the way you were treated.

Please remember: making a complaint will not affect your right to fair treatment and a good service from us.

When should I fill a complaint form in?
After you have already spoken to a staff member about it and you are not satisfied with the response you have received.

What will happen to my complaint?

- You complaint will be acknowledged within two working days.
- The manager of the appropriate team will investigate your complaint.
- You will receive a full response to your complaint within 10 working days. If this is not possible, we will send you a letter explaining why there is a delay.
- The reply you receive will tell you what to do if you are not happy with the response you get.
- Your complaint will remain confidential at all times.

Filling in the complaint form
This form includes an insert – an equality monitoring form – which is there for you to give us some information about your personal circumstances. This is so we can check that all our customers are receiving a fair service. This information will be kept separate from your complaint and will remain strictly confidential. Please return the insert with your form to us at the address on the back cover of this form.

If you need help filling in the form, please ask a Southway staff member. Or you can go to Manchester Advice in the Town Hall, a Citizens Advice Bureau or a Law Centre.

Keeping track of your complaint
To help you follow the progress of your complaint, you can fill in the details at each stage.

Date you sent complaint
Date your complaint was acknowledged
Date you received your interim response
Date you received your full response
Date you sent request for review

Date your review request was acknowledged
Date you received your review result
Date you sent your appeal

Your home

Taking the complaint further

You have the right to appeal further against the decision we have given you. You can ask an Appeal Panel consisting of the Southway Chief Executive and two members of the Southway board to consider your complaint. We call this a stage 3 complaint.

Outside Southway Housing

The vast majority of cases are sorted out at a very early stage – but, if you are still not happy with our response at the end of the process, you can take your case to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

In these rare cases, where you want to take your complaint to the higher stages, we will explain exactly what you need to do.

If we have made mistakes, or provided you with a poor service, we will acknowledge this and give an apology. If we agree that you have lost money because of the way we handled your case, we will compensate you. Every case will be considered according to its own special circumstances.

We welcome all customer feedback, including your complaints and compliments, as a way of learning from our tenants and improving our service to you in the future.

Notes

[illegible]

To get this information in Braille, large print or on CD:

Phone: **0161 448 4200** Fax: **0161 448 4334** Textphone: **0161 448 4349**
E-mail: **connect2southway@southwayhousing.co.uk**
SMS: **07554 400781** (please include your address)

To get this information in your language:

للحصول على هذه المعلومات بأي لغة أو بالبرايل أو بالحروف الكبيرة أو على شريط الرجاء الإتصال برقم الهاتف الموجود أسفله.

Arabic

এই তথ্যগুলো অন্যান্য ভাষায়, ব্রেইলে, বড় অক্ষরে অথবা সিডিতে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে নিচে দেওয়া নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

Bangla

如欲索取這資料以任何語言或盲人用點字、大字印刷編制的版本或錄音帶，請致電下列號碼。

Chinese

لطفاً برای دریافت این اطلاعات به زبان های دیگر، به خط بریل (خط ویژه افراد نابینا)، چاپ درشت و یا بر روی نوار با شماره تلفن زیر تماس بگیرید.

Farsi

Pour recevoir ces informations dans d'autres langues, en Braille, en gros caractères, ou sur bande sonore, prière d'appeler le numéro de téléphone ci-dessous.

French

यदि आप यह जानकारी किसी दूसरी भाषा, ब्रैल, बड़े प्रिन्ट या टेप में चाहते हैं तो कृपया नीचे दिये गये नम्बर पर फोन कीजिए।

Hindi

بۆ بەدەست ھێنانی ئەم زانیاریانە بە ھەر زمانێک یان بە بریال، پیتی گەورە یان لەسەر شریت، ئەوا تکایە تەلەفۆن بکە بۆ ئەم ژمارەییە خوارەوە.

Kurdish

که چیری تاسی دا مالومات په یو بیله ژبه باندی، یا د ږندو خلکو د پاره خاص لیک باندی، په غټو ټکو کښی یا په سی-ډی کښی بند تر لاسه کول غواړی نوییا مهربانی وکړی او مونږ ته په لاتدی ورکړی شوی تلیفون شمیره زنگ وکړی

Pushto

Si aad u hesho macluumaadkaani oo ku qoran luqad kasta, tan indhoolaha, daabacaad balaaran ama cajal ku duuban fadlan telefoonka hoos ku qoran:

Somali

Bu bilgiyi diğer dillerde, Braille olarak, büyük puntoda ya da CD de almak isterseniz lütfen aşağıdaki numarayı arayınız.

Turkish

یہ معلومات کسی بھی زبان، بریل، بڑے حروف یا ٹیپ پر حاصل کرنے کے لئے براہ کرم ذیل کے نمبر پر فون کیجئے۔

Urdu

