

# Southway Stories

The magazine for  
Southway Housing  
customers

Autumn 2023

## “Make sure your voice is heard!”

**Ursula Pabisch** tells us why  
it's important for tenants to get  
involved with Southway

**Pages 8-9**

2-5



### **STAR Survey Results**

What you've said, and  
what we're doing

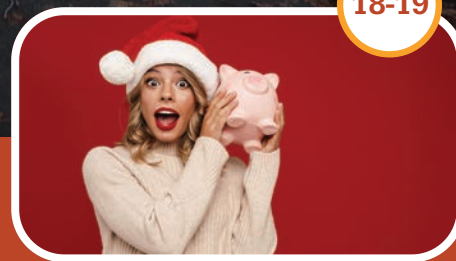
6-7



### **Condensation and mould advice**

Keeping you and your home  
healthy this winter

18-19



### **Christmas is coming!**

Keep costs down during  
the festive season





# STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) Survey Results

What you've said, and what we're doing

**In May this year, we invited all tenants to complete the STAR Survey, which we send once every two years. This survey has always been based on Housemark's questions for resident satisfaction.**

In 2022, the Regulator of Social Housing introduced new mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). We added these TSM questions into this STAR Survey – look out for the 'TSM' symbol to find them.

1,900 Southway tenants completed the survey this year. We're grateful that so many of you have taken the time to give us feedback that we can use to help us to learn and improve.

Satisfaction with Southway overall has dropped since 2021, as have your scores in many of the other areas.

This was really disappointing. But, we also weren't completely surprised by our result, given the feedback we had already had from you in the earlier Inspired by our Communities consultation.

At times we have struggled when faced with external challenges.

The rising costs of services and materials, and recruitment and resourcing issues, meant it has been difficult to recover our performance back to the levels that we delivered before the pandemic.

At the time that you answered the survey, we were not consistently keeping up with the volume of incoming calls to the Hub, or repairs that were being requested - and your results completely reflect this.

**OVERALL SATISFACTION: 69%**

← (Down from 83% in 2021)

**We want to say sorry and assure you that we were also unhappy with some of the service standards that we were offering in May. They fell short of the standards we strive for. This year, we've been putting everything into improving these services to a level you're happy with.**

## STAR Survey Results Summary (%satisfied)

TSM		72%	Treated fairly and with respect			69%	Easy to deal with
TSM		56%	Listens to and acts upon views			58%	Online services
TSM		65%	Keeps me informed on things that matter	TSM		62%	Speed of response to last query
TSM		63%	Home is well maintained	TSM		26%	Complaint handling
TSM		65%	Time taken to complete recent repair	TSM		64%	Positive contribution to neighbourhood
TSM		69%	Home is safe	TSM		66%	Communal areas well maintained
TSM		68%	Repairs Service last 12 months	TSM		55%	ASB handling

At the end of the survey, we asked, what are the main things you would like to see improve?

Here were the top comments by service:

### Your Neighbourhood priorities are

- › Dealing with ASB.
- › Parking issues.
- › Untidy gardens, and garden maintenance – comments asked for more action taken against issues, and more help for those who couldn't manage.
- › Community events, services, and spaces – a large portion of this feedback was about reopening community cafés at Age Friendly schemes.

### Your Customer Service and Communication priorities are

- › Answering the phone quicker – this was the comment we saw the most.
- › Quicker response times elsewhere – from the Housing team, about your repairs, and in response to referrals.
- › Better Digital services - improving our website forms, and the MySouthway tenant portal, in particular the repair booking tool, is very important to you.
- › Listen meaningfully – show we're listening and what we've done with your feedback.

### Your Property priorities are

- › Fencing and gates – particularly support with replacements.
- › General improvements, upkeep, and maintenance – you asked for more investment in current housing stock.
- › Tackling damp, mould and condensation – comments were about finding the root causes of problems, leading to long-term solutions over quick fixes.
- › Heating and energy efficiency – you asked for energy efficiency upgrades and more efficient boilers.

### Your Repairs and Maintenance priorities are

- › Faster response to repair requests.
- › Outstanding/overdue jobs – deal with these as soon as possible.
- › Better information and communication needed – especially when scheduling or completing repairs.
- › Better quality repairs in some areas.

## No improvements needed

**10% of comments gave us positive feedback or said no improvements were needed. Thank you for this feedback, it lets us know where we're doing well and should keep investing. Positive feedback talked about:**

- › Being grateful for the safety and security of living in a social home
- › Southway going above and beyond with support offered
- › That we're doing lots for the benefit of the local area
- › Appreciation for the respect and politeness of our staff

You can view the full results summary on our website at [southwayhousing.co.uk/STAR-Survey](https://southwayhousing.co.uk/STAR-Survey).



## How we're responding to feedback

Your feedback is now being used to shape how we deliver many of our services and will also be at the heart of any future plans for improvements.

Here are some examples of how – you can find out more throughout this newsletter.



### Customer and Housing Services

#### You Said

*I want Southway to be easier to deal with, and for online services to improve.*

*I want the phone answered quicker when I ring, and for other response times to shorten, like when I have a referral to my Housing Officer.*

*I want to know my local Officers and see them in the community, and have access to a better, more responsive Housing service.*

#### We're Doing

- › We've relaunched the MySouthway Repairs portal, meaning you can book your own repairs again 24/7.
- › We've invested in the Customer Hub and Repairs team, increasing staff in each and spending more on resources.
- › We're prioritising improving the Customer Hub phone service and email response because these routes are important to you.
- › We're answering the phone much quicker on average and always responding to emails within timescales.
- › We're professionalising our Housing Management Service, with an emphasis on better customer care, being out in the community, dealing with problems quickly at the source, and speaking to you on the doorstep and in the neighbourhood.

**See more on pages 10-14.**



### Communication and Relationships

#### You Said

*I want to feel I'm treated fairly and with respect in every interaction with Southway that I have.*

*I want to be kept informed on the things that matter to me.*

*I want Southway to listen to my views and act on them.*

#### We're Doing

- › We're doing lots of work to strengthen our Customer Care culture and the way we communicate with you, which will include a new regular training programme for staff, focusing on respect. We've built this into our Complaints Review
- › We're relaunching our Customer Care Standards to make sure they meet expectations and drive strong services.
- › We have a new Communication Strategy, with an aim to make the way we communicate with tenants and one another at Southway (internal communication) better.
- › We're part-way through a project about putting Tenant Voice at the heart of decision making and have heard from lots of you at our two Voice events. We're learning from other housing associations and their tenants about what works, and will be using this to make changes at Southway.

**See pages 8 & 9, 14 & 15.**



## Repairs

### You Said

*I want repairs to be completed more quickly.*

*I want to be kept better updated about my repairs.*

*Sometimes, you can arrive without the right materials for the job, slowing the repair process down.*

### We're Doing

- ▶ We've reviewed the Repairs Policy with help from tenants. You can find our new standards in this Policy on our website.
- ▶ We're doing a full end-to-end review of the Repairs Service, with a focus on improving the customer journey and making things more efficient, which will help to speed up our repairs.
- ▶ We know that communication around repairs needs to improve and this will be another big focus of our review.
- ▶ We'll be inviting all tenants to be involved when we have a new, better repairs process ready to consult on. **We'll update you on this in the next issue of Southway Stories.**



## Maintenance

### You Said

*I want a home that's well maintained.*

*I'd like the energy efficiency of my home to be improved, so it can be heated more affordably.*

*I want help tackling damp, mould and condensation in the home for good.*

### We're Doing

- ▶ We're making lots of improvements to our Damp and Mould repairs process. This includes quicker response times, more communication and support, including aftercare, and working together to treat the root cause of issues.
- ▶ We now have new Property Care Officers to guide you through this.
- ▶ We're running programmes to improve the energy efficiency of over a quarter of our 6,000 homes. We have started with the least energy-efficient property types.
- ▶ We're also raising our Empty Home Standard to do the same.

**See pages 6, 7 and 20.**



## Rent, Money and Advice

### You Said

*I have less financial security than at the time of the last survey in 2021. This has made rent and service charges feel less affordable.*

### We're Doing

- ▶ We'll keep offering free and impartial advice services, and always look for new ways we can help. This includes:
  - ▶ Our Living Well Fund
  - ▶ Our regular programme of free employment courses and jobs fairs
  - ▶ Cosy Mondays – weekly warm space events at Southern Gate with winter warmth freebies and money advice sessions. **You can find a full list at [southwayhousing.co.uk/cost-of-living](https://southwayhousing.co.uk/cost-of-living).**
- ▶ We will always support you to maintain your tenancy and avoid arrears. We can do this by setting up affordable arrears payment plans, and helping you to manage your money and maximise benefits. Just get in touch.

**See pages 17-19.**

**The rest of this newsletter is dedicated to areas that you told us were important to you, or needed improvement, in STAR. Look out for this STAR image to see how we've used your feedback to shape our work.**







# Condensation, damp and mould

## Keeping you and your home healthy this winter

As we enter the colder months, our homes are more at risk of condensation, damp and mould. Understanding why this is can help us to avoid issues and handle small ones before they get worse.

This is important because, if untreated, mould can cause serious health problems. We will do everything we can to work with you to keep you and your home healthy, and we've been improving our approach to damp and mould for the last two years to do this.



## Preventing condensation and mould

There are three main things we can all do to lower the risk in our homes:

### 1. Reduce moisture



#### To reduce moisture

Wipe condensation from your windows and sills

Cover pans and keep the heat low while cooking

Don't dry clothes on radiators – use an airer. Leave the window ajar and close the door

### 2. Help ventilation (air flow)



#### To help ventilation

Don't turn off extractor fans or trickle vents

Leave gaps between walls and furniture

Open windows on opposite sides of your home for 30 minutes each day

### 3. Improve heating



#### To improve heating

Keep the home temperature steady – ideally 18-21°C

Keep heating on a constant low in kitchens and bathrooms

Set radiators to a lower temperature in the rooms you use less



## Handling small issues

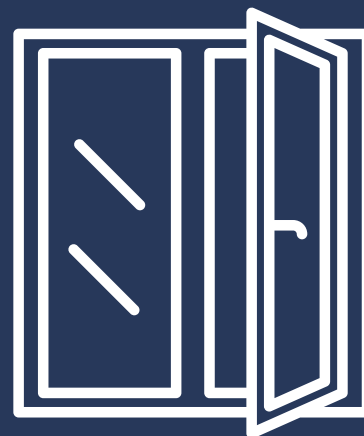
Get in touch with us straight away if you're concerned about mould at home. But if you can, treating small patches can be straightforward and help stop things from getting worse.

Remember to wear protective gloves, use mould remover, fungicidal wash, domestic cleaning products or white vinegar, ventilate the area, and clean and dry all nearby surfaces afterwards. Do not vacuum or sweep over mould.

## How to report things to us

We have a dedicated damp and mould team here to help you. The best way to reach us is to call 0161 448 4200, press 2 for Repairs, then 1 for the direct Damp and Mould line.

You'll speak to or leave a message for our specialist advisors. They'll ask lots of questions to help diagnose the problem and its root causes, allowing us to get the right type of repair booked and the right tradesperson out to you. They will either be a Southway operative, one of our new Property Care Officers, or **Mouldex**, our trusted partner.



## Introducing...

## Our Property Care Officers

We'd like to introduce Southway's new Property Care Officers, George and Don, who are stepping into brand new roles here.

You might recognise them – both George and Don have been with Southway for some time (as part of Energy Buddies and Property Services), so they know our communities and our properties well.

### We spoke to them about what Property Care means:

*"We're looking forward to adding that extra layer of care to the process. We'll be working closely with our tenants to manage a range of home maintenance matters, including damp and mould. Where necessary, we'll coordinate with contractors like Mouldex on your behalf."* **George**

*"There can be quite a range of work involved when it comes to damp and mould in homes, which can be difficult to follow along. But we'll be there every step of the way to discuss repair work with you, making sure repairs have been successful and that you're satisfied. Where possible, we'll provide on-the-spot solutions too, and we can identify where further work is needed and book follow-up jobs and inspections."* **Don**



**GEORGE MOLLOY**



**DON EVANS**



# Thank you for your service on our People and Places Committee

We spoke to Ursula Pabisch, a tenant from Burnage, about her seven-year service on our People & Places Committee – part of Southway's governance structure – which came to an end in August 2023. We wanted to find out why she felt it was important for tenants to become involved with us.



## How did you first become involved with Southway?

In 2012, I was asked to join the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (which is still going strong by the way, and I highly recommend it). This involvement made me become aware of the fact that we actually have a lot of rights as tenants, plus we could find out what's happening behind the scenes, such as the workload for the officers. When we were still Manchester City Council tenants, I felt we had to comply with whatever the Council would expect from us without being able to have any significant input. In 2013, my dad died and I experienced some very severe health issues myself on top. I needed some time out. In 2016, I was asked by (the lovely and supportive) Maureen Ward whether I would be interested in joining the newly-formed People & Places Committee and I said yes. I was ready for something new.

## What has changed in your time with Southway? What are your proudest achievements?

When I started on the committee, business reports within the meeting and also communication with tenants were far too formal, and I've been actively involved in helping to improve this. I'm proud of the work

I have done separately from committee meetings, such as writing summaries on national up-to-date EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) developments after having attended a couple of NHF (National Housing Federation) conferences; this was definitely taken into account by Southway at the time.

I'm also happy that I played a part in Southway's decision to provide financial support for Board and Committee members, if they require it, in order to help meet their costs related to their expenses. It's essential for tenants to know that they are listened to by Southway, and I believe that I had at least a part in paving the way for future tenants' empowerment.

## What else would you like to see happen in the future?

I feel very passionate about tenant involvement. My hope is that tenants will realise more and more that, by working together with their local housing trust, they can be part of shaping the environment and the communities they live in. They can actively make a difference for their own and their children's future, which I find inspiring. I also believe the 'human touch' of being able to pop into Southway's reception, being able to call the Hub or to speak to someone from Southway in person is





and will remain important. Whilst there might be a certain amount of pressure for everything to go digital these days, my view is that in-person meetings are actually more efficient in the long run and real community forms when people get together, for example in community centres, which are so vital.

### **What would you say to encourage other tenants to get involved with Southway?**

**Don't be shy, you have rights! Make sure your voice is heard!**

The majority of Southway staff are really helpful and considerate, and there are many ways you can get involved (aside from boards or committees). Maybe have a look at the events calendar on the Southway website to check what's going on in your local community centres. There are a variety of things, from debt advice to 'crafternoons', learning computer skills, 'men talk' groups, age-friendly coffee mornings, cooking classes, English conversation classes, gardening skills, or Quids In food clubs (you'll save lots of money on food as well!), to name but a few. And we have the Beautiful South Fund available as well for new projects if you happen to have an idea for something to get started! Even if you can only make it now and again, it will certainly be beneficial for your mental health, enjoyment and your sense of belonging within a community, and it's empowering to know that, as a tenant, you have a say. The Tenant Voice events held recently were well attended and I expect the accumulative 'Tenant Voice' will be heard more loudly by Southway in days to come as it will become more and more important for Southway to listen and respond to us as tenants.

### **Thank you, Ursula. What's in store for you next? Will you still be involved with Southway?**

I have just joined our Anti-Social Behaviour Service Improvement Group (ASB SIG). We look at the current ASB and Hate Crime Policy to see whether it's still working for us as tenants since it was written a few years ago. This is obviously quite a serious and emotive subject, but it's good to address the paperwork and suggest amends that are more in line with current and more up-to-date insights and attitudes in our society towards mental health, trauma and family histories.

**If this is something you'd like to get involved with, don't hesitate to get in touch with Southway as we've only just started, and it's not a massive commitment – we meet once every three months.**

## **TENANT VOICE** **Have your say!**



**We're looking for tenants to get involved and tell us what you think about our services and how they could be improved. You'll find ways you can currently get involved below.**

We're also looking at new ways for tenants to influence the way we do things and help make decisions. If you have any ideas about how we can do this, please let us know. We're open to all suggestions and are flexible on when and how we meet. We want to work with you in a way that suits you!

### **Tenant Scrutiny Panel**

**What do we do?** Take a detailed look at our services to check if they are being delivered

**How often?** As needed

### **Complaints Service**

#### **Improvement Group (SIG)**

**What do we do?** Look at a selection of real complaints made to Southway by tenants to check if they were handled effectively and within target.

**How often?** Twice a year on a Thursday morning

### **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

#### **Service Improvement Group (SIG)**

**What do we do?** Talk to people who have used our ASB service and other tenants who are committed to improving the service about performance and how we communicate.

**How often do we meet?** Every three months on a Wednesday

### **Armchair Group**

**What do we do?** Comment on one-off surveys and documents

**How often do we meet?** We don't! Everything is done over email

We also have the following volunteering opportunities:

**Quids In Food Clubs, Community Champions, Green Inspectors, Digital Champions**

**If you'd like to get involved but aren't sure what would suit you best, or would like to observe a meeting to see what it's like, that's fine – just get in touch and we can arrange it.**

**Maureen Ward (Customer Involvement Manager)**  
**m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk or 0161 448 4200**





# Housing Management & Support

A new team at Southway improving services

**We've re-organised our Housing teams to make the way that we support you with tenancy and housing matters better and faster, which you've told us are top priorities.**

These changes will help us to deliver services in a more effective way, and make it easier for us to work with you towards resolutions on important issues.

## The changes include...

- ▶ We have a new housing team called **Housing Management** and have invested additional money in the service to increase staff numbers.
- ▶ Our **Age Friendly Management** service is the equivalent delivering services at our age friendly and age restricted homes.
- ▶ We have created new positions for two new **Housing Assistants**, who will organise **Housing Officer** appointments and who can update you on things like accommodation offers and viewings, and support with tenancy changes, like mutual exchanges.
- ▶ Our housing patch areas (the areas that Housing Officers oversee) have slightly changed, with officers working over smaller patches giving them more time to dedicate to tenants.
- ▶ Our plans will see us out and about more, speaking to you in the neighbourhood and on doorsteps. This will make us more visible in our communities and better placed to learn from our work.
- ▶ Our **Tenancy Support** and **Community Safety** (previously ASB) teams are now working closely and directly with our Housing Management service, as we want you to have a more effective and joined up service.



## What do I need to do as a tenant?

As a customer you don't need to do anything differently. We will make sure you are directed to the right person for your enquiry.

The changes do mean that for some tenants, you will have a new Housing Officer.

You'll still access services by contacting the Customer Hub, who will connect you with right person in our Housing Management team. The next person you speak to might be a Housing Assistant, booking in an appointment for you with your Housing Officer in a way that suits you (like a home visit, office visit, or telephone appointment).

## Your Housing Officers and their patches:

### West (Chorlton and West Didsbury)

Adam Timothy, Jean Hurley, Carol Beckford, and Jabeen Qurashi (Age Friendly)

### Central (Didsbury (Village and East), Old Moat and Withington)

Jean Hurley, Kate Smyth, Azima Begum, Gavin Wood, Karen Nicholson, and Hazel Allen (Age Friendly)

### East (Burnage and Fallowfield)

Simon Kirby, Gavin Wood, Adam Purnell, and Hazel Allen (Age Friendly)

When you next get in touch with us about housing, we can tell you who your Housing Officer is. Your Housing Officer will also be getting in touch with you soon to introduce or reintroduce themselves!



## Meet the team

**We asked Housing Officer Gavin Wood about what these changes mean for his role:**

*"I have been a Housing Officer since 2007 when Southway was established. As part of the new structure, I'm going 'back to my roots', and managing a large chunk of the Old Moat Estate along with my colleague Azima Begum.*

*Though the changes within the team will take a little time to implement, in the long run, officers will have the opportunity to be seen more in the community and to be able to support tenants with any challenges and concerns they may be facing. We are approachable and will always listen to any difficulties around Housing Management."* **Gavin**



**We also want to thank Mike Moriarty for his 15 years as a Housing Officer! Mike has moved to a newly established role: Environment Officer:**

*"The changes that have been made are positive, and I look forward to seeing them help us to deliver a high-quality service and respond to customer enquiries and reduce complaints.*

*I'm looking forward to my new role. I've been an Environmental Officer before so I have experience and it'll be good for tenants to have someone with the specific duty to look after issues such as complaints about trees and boundaries. I'll be looking at what we can do to enhance small communal and grassed areas within budgets, working closely with colleagues to address environmental issues and creating links with Manchester City Council and other partners."* **Mike**

## Grow your own on our green spaces



**Southway is committed to providing and maintaining good quality green and open spaces at the highest level possible. We'll be carrying out work to address and use several of the many landlocked/green spaces in our areas.**

One possibility would be to use these areas as places to grow fruit and veg, similar to allotment plots.

We will, of course, start by making these areas fit for purpose, offering our support and assistance. We'll rely on committed members of the community to maintain and make full use of the spaces going forward.

**The benefits of creating these green growing spaces are countless and include:**

- Knowing where your food comes from
- Saving money by growing your own.
- Meeting new people in your community
- Teaching children where their food comes from
- Reducing food waste
- Making and protecting habitats for wildlife like robins, hedgehogs, frogs and bees
- Keeping fit and healthy

**If you're interested in any of getting involved in our green spaces, please get in touch via the **Customer Hub**.**



# Keeping you updated as we improve Customer Service Standards

## Contacting Us

**We know it is really important to you that our customer services meet your expectations and that we always have an open, clear, and consistent line of communication with you about how we're performing. This is especially true at times when we might fall short of those agreed standards.**

Thanks to an increase in investment, the work of the teams behind them, and your patience and understanding, we've seen our customer service standards improve over the last four months.

We're now significantly closer to getting our customer services back to where they need to be. We have improved our performance from earlier in the year and we are working towards our target of answering 90% of your calls. We have reduced the time you have had to wait for us to answer your calls.

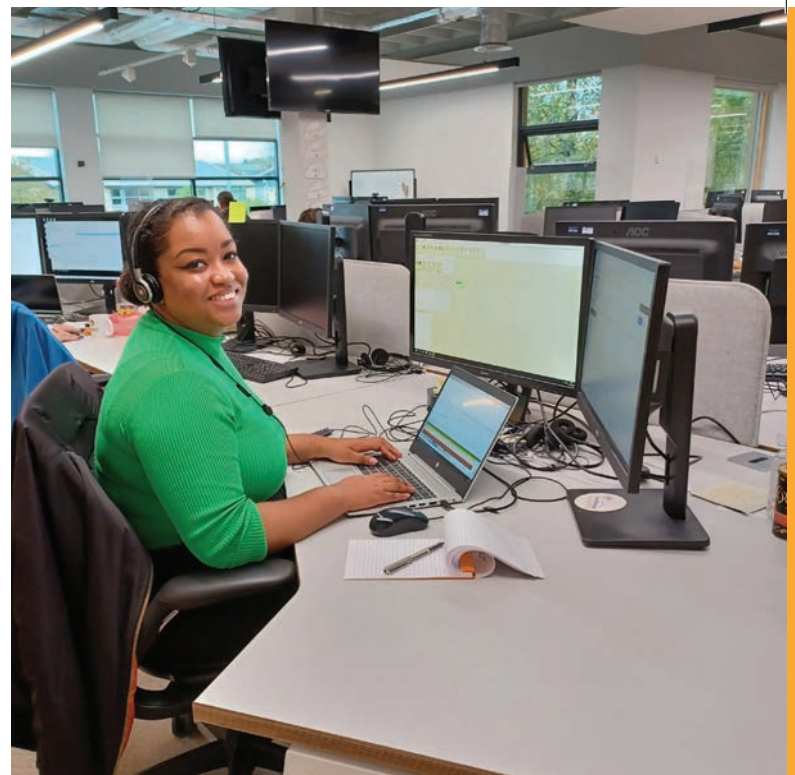
However, we know the number of calls we have been getting has increased in recent weeks as we move into the colder months, and we're sorry there have still been times when some of you haven't been able to get through. We'll continue to work on improving the quality of our service to make it even better for you.

While we're always happy to speak with you, there are other ways that you can contact us and access services that might better suit you. Don't forget that on the MySouthway Tenant Portal, you can check and pay your rent, and you can now book repairs online again 24/7. See the letter included with this newsletter for guidance.

## Repairs service improvements

**We're also making progress on overdue repairs. In April, the backlog was over 1,000 and our investment in the team and the hard work of all involved has reduced that significantly.**

We're continuing to tackle the backlog by making more future appointments to carry out work that's overdue.



We've also seen an increase in new requests for repairs in recent weeks and the team is working hard to keep up with this demand, as well as reducing the backlog of overdue jobs to a minimal level. What this will mean for you is that, if you need to report a repair, you'll receive an appointment sooner than you currently do, in line with our target timeframes.

## Sharing our progress

**To keep you informed, we're reporting these service standards to you on our website and social media every week. If there are any problems, we'll use these reports to tell you about them, explain why they're happening, and what we're doing to fix them.**





## Extended opening hours at our office and on our phone lines



**We know that having access to our services is important to you.**

So, due to recent feedback, our Reception at Southern Gate will now be open an hour earlier – from 9am rather than 10am – from Monday to Thursday, starting from Monday 1st November.

From November, we'll also be open again on Wednesday afternoons. We initially closed on Wednesday afternoons so we could provide our Hub Advisors with enhanced training to help you

with a wider range of issues the first time you call. Our team has been trained in everything from damp and mould to diagnostic skills, making it easier and faster for us to resolve any issues you might have.

**For up-to-date information on our opening times, please visit our [southwayhousing.co.uk/contact-us](https://www.southwayhousing.co.uk/contact-us) or keep an eye on our social media channels. The opening times for our phonelines have also been increased and will now be available 8am-5.30pm Monday to Friday.**

## A closer look at our recent progress...



**Target – minimal level**

### Overdue Repairs

APRIL	1000+
SEPTEMBER	474
OCT	322
NOV	327



**Target – 0**

### Emails Overdue

APRIL	605
JUNE	346
AUGUST	0
SEPTEMBER	0
OCTOBER	0
NOVEMBER	0



**Target – 90%**

### Calls Answered

APRIL	63%
JUNE	79%
AUGUST	89%
SEPTEMBER	91%
OCTOBER*	84%
NOVEMBER	88%



**Target – 2 mins**

### Average Call Wait Times

APRIL	15 MINS
JUNE	9 MINS
AUGUST	5 MINS 47 SECS
SEPT	3 MINS 2 SECS
OCT*	5 MINS 2 SECS
NOV	4 MINS 3 SECS

\* As always happens at this time of year, calls started to increase from October. The Customer Hub team now has improved its ways of working to respond to this increase.



## Learning how others put the tenant voice at the heart of decision-making

**David Hampson, Vice-Chair of Southway's Parent Board, recently visited First Choice Homes Oldham with our Governance team. Here's a short insight into what he plans to bring back to his role as a Tenant Board member here at Southway.**



I visited FCHO as part of our work on putting tenant voice at the heart of decision-making here at Southway and it felt that Southway is a couple of years behind in this process. FCHO has over 150 tenants with diverse backgrounds that they can draw on for their scrutiny panels, making sure that the tenant voice is fully represented.

They run tenant engagement events very frequently; with a full-time role for one team member to go out into the community and bring tenants into this process. Their events are well-attended and they have an enviable record for signing tenants

up to be involved in the decision-making process. They also make a concerted effort to ensure that information, on performance for example, is presented to tenants in an understandable format, so they can make informed decisions.

Emma, the team lead, did say that there were challenges in the process and that they are working at building trust with tenant customers.

However, communication and a genuine wish to involve tenants have ensured a successful outcome for them.

I would like to see similar structures appear in Southway as I was greatly impressed with their passion and determination for embracing co-production and making their organisation fit for the new reality.

Southway has achieved a lot in terms of tenant voice and has lots of good people willing to further embrace this process. It perhaps needs a dedicated team similar to FCHO's to make this possible.

**Read more about David's visit to First Choice Home Oldham on our website.**

## Stop hate, stay safe

### Did you know that you can report Hate Crimes and Incidents at Third Party Reporting Centres?

Southway's Southern Gate office is one of these centres and there are seven other centres in our buildings and across the Southway area.

Not all victims are comfortable with reporting their experiences directly to the police. Some may find visiting police stations intimidating or daunting; some may fear being outed in terms of their sexuality or disability.

Third Party Reporting Centres provide an alternative way to report a hate crime. They give confidential advice, help you report it, and support you along the way. You can remain anonymous if you wish, and you don't need to have contact with the police if you don't want to.

**If you want to report a hate crime or incident, you can do so at any of the following Third-Party Reporting Centres listed below.**

**Southway Housing Trust – 0161 448 4200**

Southern Gate, 729 Princess Road, Manchester, M20 2LT

**Barlow Moor Community Centre – 0161 446 4805**

23 Merseybank Ave, Manchester M21 7NT

**Old Moat Sure Start Childrens Centre – 0161 234 4711**

Old Moat Lane, Withington, Manchester M20 1DE

**Westcroft Community Centre – 0161 448 8232**

26 Westcroft Rd, Manchester M20 6EF

**Dahlia House – 0161 448 4200**

Burnage Lane, Manchester M19 1FL

**Gorton Mill House - 0161 448 4200**

420 Abbey Hey Ln, Abbey Hey, Manchester M18 8PU

**Grove Lane – 0161 448 4200**

Didsbury, Manchester, M20 6UF

**Holland Court – 0161 448 4200**

382 Barlow Moor Rd, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 8BF



# Do you know how to let us know what you think of us?

**Receiving and resolving complaints is one of the best ways for us to hear tenant voices and find out the issues that are affecting the people who live in Southway homes.**

Of course, we'd like it if nothing ever went wrong. But sometimes, things don't go as well as they should and it's really important to us that we respond quickly when this happens.

In 2022, following feedback from our tenants and the Housing Ombudsman, we realised we had to improve our approach to complaints. We started a project to achieve the following goals:

- Respond to complaints within the timescales in our Complaints Policy
- Carry out thorough investigations to make sure that we achieve the right outcome for our tenants
- Deal with anyone raising a complaint with empathy and understanding.

We carried out Customer Service training with our staff, reviewed the letters that we send as part of our complaint responses, and consulted with our tenant Complaints Service Improvement Group on how they would expect to be treated if they raised a complaint.

We're making progress and are currently responding to 100% of complaints in time.

Complaint responses are also being checked to make sure that they're written in the right tone and are of the right quality before they're sent out.

However, we know we can do more. If you have a problem, we want to know about it, so we can fix it for you and improve services for all our tenants.

**There's lots of information on our website, including guidance on how to raise a complaint if you are dissatisfied – visit [southwayhousing.co.uk/complaints](https://southwayhousing.co.uk/complaints)**

**100% OF COMPLAINTS are being responded to in time**



## Involving the Housing Ombudsman

Like all other housing associations, Southway subscribes to the Housing Ombudsman scheme. The Ombudsman sets the standards for how we deal with complaints, provides judgements on complaints we deal with if you aren't satisfied, and provides advice, support and guidance to both tenants and landlords.

**You can contact them at any point, either before you make a complaint or during the process. Their contact details are:**

**[info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)**

**0300 111 3000**

**Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ.**

The Complaints Service Improvement Group is a group of tenants that meets twice a year to look at how we've handled complaints, tell us what we could have done better, and monitor improvements we've promised to make. They really help to make a difference to our service.

**If you'd like to get involved, please contact Maureen Ward at [m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk](mailto:m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk)**



# Save £s at our Community Swap Shop

**Carol Haney, a Southway tenant from Withington, chatted to us about her passion for helping local people as a community champion, activist and anti-poverty campaigner. She's part of the team planning a Southway Swap Shop event at Westcroft Community Centre between 12-2pm on Saturday 25th November.**



## How did the idea of a Community Swap Shop start?

Things are difficult for people who have less cash to splash, especially at this time of year. So I thought 'why not do something where people don't need any money?'. We want people to bring along pre-loved toys, games and gifts, but everyone is welcome even if they can't bring anything to swap. It will also help the environment as people will be re-using and recycling things that would otherwise be destined for landfill.

Things are difficult for people who have less cash to splash, especially at this time of year. So I thought 'why not do something where people don't need any money?'. We want people to bring along pre-loved toys, games and gifts, but everyone is welcome even if they can't bring anything to swap. It will also help the environment as people will be re-using and recycling things that would otherwise be destined for landfill.

## How did you first become involved in the local community?

You can sum that up in one word: poverty! This is a first-world country so there's no reason why people shouldn't be able to put food on the table for their children here.

As a Community Champion, I spread the word about things going on in our communities. This includes brilliant events like when Westcroft Community Centre had England's matches on a big screen during the Football World Cup.

## Tell us about your involvement with the Beautiful South Fund...

This is a massive project that allows people in our communities to apply for funding to help them achieve

their goals. I'm always staggered at how much people achieve with the funding award – events like a dinner or a day out can make such a difference to those involved. I'm on the appraisal panel that assesses applications. Southway staff attend the panel meetings but it's the tenants who make the decisions on funding. Interestingly, it's the only fund that individuals can apply for too. We're only halfway through the 10-year programme, so anyone who has a good idea or a community project in mind can contact the Beautiful South Fund team.

## What do you think about the Tenant Voice events?

It's a newly created forum for tenants to voice their opinions on how things could be improved and for Southway staff to listen to tenants' suggestions. The opportunity is there to have your say... there have been some lively debates!

I can only speak for myself, but I hope more tenants come along to say what they feel could be improved. It's your voice, it's your choice.

## Thanks, Carol. One last question: what change would you like to see in our communities?

I'd like to see more trading of goods and services provided by tenants and local suppliers with less reliance on outside sources – keeping the wealth circulating around our neighbourhoods is the future!



## Sofra serves up a win at Spirit of Manchester awards

We're delighted to report that Sofra, who run and maintain Dahlia House Café, in Burnage, have won the 'Social Economy Champion' Spirit of Manchester award!

*"There are no words that could describe how we felt. it's an honour and privilege to be recognised for our hard work, commitment, and care towards our community. The café is very important, especially with our values which means everyone is welcome, we care about others, and we bring people together through the power of food. It's very important to have welcoming and open doors to the wider community... it has a massive effect on reducing isolation."*

Congratulations to Najwa and the whole Sofra team! We highly recommend checking out the lovely atmosphere Sofra have created at Dahlia House Cafe (alongside the fantastic food and drink!) for yourself:

Dahlia House  
210 Burnage Lane  
Manchester M19 1LF



## Success at Summer Jobs Fest '23

September saw the Southway Employment Support team deliver its annual jobs fair, **Summer Jobs Fest '23.**

The fair was a fantastic opportunity for people to come and weigh up their options while receiving CV support and advice from members of our team. Organisations including The Christie Hospital, Manchester City Council and Home Instead joined us to share their employment and training opportunities with tenants and local residents.

Cara EPS were one of the organisations who successfully recruited a tenant from the event,

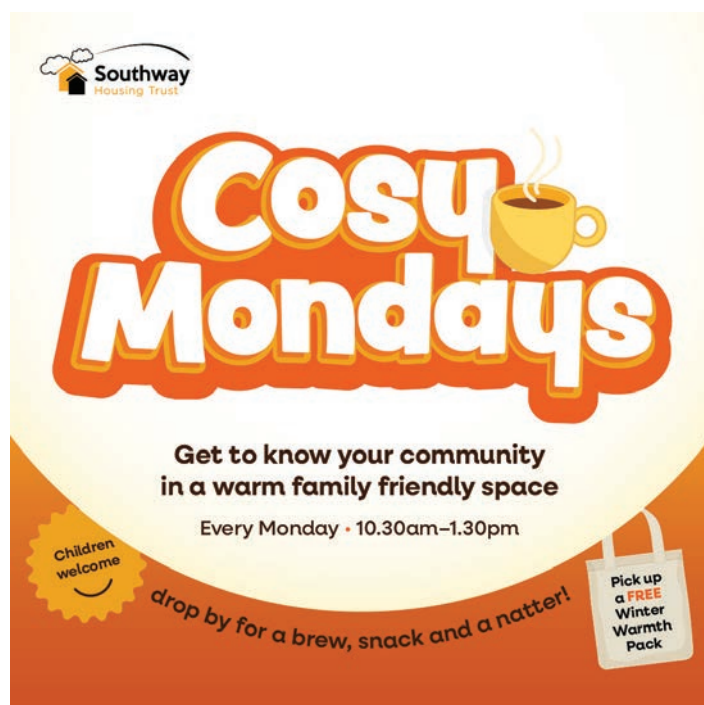
with managing director Mark Beirne saying: "The great thing about it is that all the people we've brought on via Southway represent themselves and the business very well, are all assets and thoroughly employable with so much potential!"

Business Network Support Officer **Iain McGowan** added:

*"It's great to be able to provide a link between our tenants and the opportunities that are available locally with a range of organisations who we've worked with before. The overriding feedback was that attendees enjoyed the event and got something useful from it, even if it was just a conversation to find out more about working in a particular role or industry."*

**We host employment events like job fairs, workshops and training sessions throughout the year. To stay up to date with the latest opportunities, go to [southwayhousing.co.uk/support-services/employment-skills-training/](https://southwayhousing.co.uk/support-services/employment-skills-training/) or keep an eye on our social media.**





## Come for a cuppa at Cosy Mondays

**Join us between 10.30am-1.30pm every Monday from now until 25th March (apart from Christmas Day and New Year's Day) for Cosy Mondays in the Forum at Southern Gate!**

All local residents – not just Southway tenants – are invited to come in for a catch-up and a cuppa in a warm and welcoming space. Children are welcome too and can have enjoy some juice while they read books or play games.

**See our website for more info on special activities at Cosy Monday sessions.**

**One of the next themed sessions is Christmas Wreath Making on Monday 27th November. Come along for a free festive activity and take a wreath home for your door!**

## Take the stress out of Christmas

**Christmas is around the corner and it's such an exciting time of year, especially for our children, but with this comes extra pressure in providing for our loved ones. For Christmas:**

- 1 in 5 people go into the new year in debt
- 1 in 10 people turn to loan sharks to borrow

This causes a great deal of stress later down the line when you try to cover the repayments.

### **Our top tips are:**

- Do Secret Santa with a set budget - this way, everyone gets a gift, with the pressure taken off those who can't afford to buy for everyone
- If you need to borrow, use safe lenders such as credit unions or Community Development financial institutes
- Only borrow what you need and don't borrow more than you can comfortably afford to pay back

- Use cashback sites such as TopCashback, to make sure you're making savings with every purchase. This way, you can use this money to pay off any debts!
- Use charity shops and pre-loved websites to find a bargain
- Consider making something homemade like cookies or cakes to share

### **Beware of Loan Sharks**

Loan sharks are illegal money lenders who come in many forms. They could be people you know, work colleagues, parents in the playground. This means they lend money without any regulation and charge extremely high interest, which can sometimes change and make it harder for you to pay the debt off.



If you're worried that someone you know is using a loan shark, you can report anonymously at **[stoploansharks.co.uk](http://stoploansharks.co.uk)**.

### **Affordable and safe borrowing**

Southway offers an affordable loan of £300 with years to pay it off and transparent fees from a reputable lender, South Manchester Credit Union (SMCU). SMCU also has a Christmas savings account that you can start today to get ready for next year.

**Contact us for more information on services mentioned in this section, or if you're in financial difficulty, or have questions about debt, money management or saving.**



## We're here to help

Southway has a wide range of support and services to help our tenants and the wider community, including help with:

- Employment
- Debt advice
- Benefits
- Opening a bank account, including ID

Read about some of our current services below.

### Living Well Fund

The Living Well Fund is a one-off supermarket voucher to help support you with cost-of-living pressures.

**Vouchers worth up to £70** for a choice of seven stores can be chosen to suit your needs. This is open to all tenants. If you'd like to apply for a voucher, please contact the Hub and you'll be placed on the waiting list. We'll then contact you when you're next in line.

### Second-hand school uniform & shoes

We have access to a range of school uniform items in various sizes and colours, not including jumpers or school blazers. We have a limited supply of new school shoes, for both boys and girls. We know how hard it is to keep up with growing feet so, if you need a new pair of school shoes for your little ones, please get in touch.

### Kindness rail

Visit the office and bring an empty bag! We have two rails of mixed clothing, coats and shoes available and they're all completely free. You'll find a mixture of pre-loved and new clothing, as well as homewares and trinkets when they're available. Just pop into the office and help yourself.

### Toiletries

We have toiletry packs available on request, including shampoo, shower gel etc. Just get in touch to request a pack.

**For further info or help with any of the services mentioned above, please contact the Customer Hub and ask to speak to our Advice Team.**



## Update for Tax Credit claimants

**We're making tenants who claim tax credits aware of some important news from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).**

Most of those who claim Tax Credits and claim no other benefits such as income-based Jobseekers Allowance will be moved to Universal Credit by the end of March 2024.

Tax credit claimants who also claim other benefits will be selected to move to Universal Credit during 2024.

**The DWP will write to you when they want to move you to Universal Credit, telling you what you need to do. If your Universal Credit entitlement is less than your entitlement to legacy benefits, such as Income Support and 'Child Tax Credit' you will receive a 'transitional amount' to top up your Universal Credit.**

## Are you missing out on money you're entitled to?

**Many people are still struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and we want to help you make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to.**

Even if you or members of your family work, there are still benefits you can get that aren't means tested. This means they don't take into account savings, income, and – in some cases – National Insurance contributions.

These payments are: Attendance Allowance, Bereavement Support Payment, Carer's Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, new-style Employment and Support Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, and State Pension.

**Read more on both of these important issues on our website, or contact our Advice Team via the Hub for further information.**



## Improving energy efficiency and ventilation in Southway homes



**This year, we received £2 million of government funding to use to improve and reduce carbon in 1,112 Southway homes. We're making homes more energy-efficient, which will help residents to keep them warmer, helping them to save money on fuel bills.**

### What sort of improvements?

The improvements will include things like energy-efficient heating systems, insulation measures, solar panels (solar PV) and low-energy lighting - we will know more about which homes receive which upgrades when surveys are completed.

We also recently received more funding to use to install better ventilation measures in 500 further homes. This funding and work is designed to tackle some of the causes of damp and mould in Manchester homes.

### Which homes are included?

The 1,112 homes selected to receive energy-efficiency measures are the Southway homes that are rated least thermally efficient in the government's EPC rating system.

The 500 homes that we're contacting in November about ventilation systems are homes that, due to their type, will benefit the most from better ventilation.

### What's next?

We and our partners, Cara EPS and Greener Solutions, have contacted most of the homes selected via a letter or a call and arranged lots of inspections and work.



**We're really pleased that five Southway tenants have gained employment through these green projects!**

*Two of them, trainee Ian Yates and apprentice Marcel Partington, are pictured on the right above, with Cara-EPS colleagues Faye Openshaw, Kathryn Molloy, Scott Keellings, Mark Beirne and John Weldon.*

If you've received a letter but haven't got back to us, make sure you do. If you don't accept the improvements, we'll offer them to the next household on the list.

Surveying homes for the project has also provided us with really useful data about our homes, which will help us make decisions on future investment programmes.

### Find out more

You can read more about this work, and Southway's plans to lower carbon across our homes and communities, on our website under 'Energy and Low Carbon Living'.

**There's help available for any Southway tenant who'd like advice or support with energy efficiency, fuel bills, and keeping well this winter. Please contact our Customer Hub and let us know what you'd like support with – our team will be able to help, or will arrange a referral for you to another support service.**

## Talented Gorton residents co-produce artwork

**On 25th September, We were blown away by this beautiful new artwork, which is now on display at Gorton Mill Café.**

The piece of art, titled 'Keep Moving Forward', was co-created by Abbey Hey residents – including Gorton Mill House residents – and the artist, **Sam Owen Hull**, under the **Aging in Place Pathfinder Project** in Abbey Hey, Gorton.

The work considers what it's like to live in Abbey Hey and how the residents feel it could be better. The collage combines original drawings by members of the community and the artist's interpretation of their artwork, produced in a series of creative workshops with walk-and-talk and sharing sessions, plus drawing and clay-making time.



*Next time you're in Gorton Mill Café, be sure to check it out!*