

# ANNUAL REPORT

FOR TENANTS

## 2021-2022





# CONTENTS

◆ Introduction/Welcome	2-3
◆ Our housing stock	4
◆ Maintaining your home	5
◆ Keeping your home safe	6
◆ Value for money, what we spend	7
◆ Tenant satisfaction	8
◆ Involving our tenants	9
◆ Keeping neighbourhoods and communities safe	10
◆ Delivering services and looking forward	11
◆ Information for tenants	12

## Introduction



### Dear Tenant,

I am very happy to be introducing this annual report which presents a range of information about how your homes are managed and maintained.

The report includes information about how we invest in homes, repair and improve them and respond to the issues and complaints that you raise. It will tell you how the rent that we collect is used to maintain and raise the quality of council homes in the borough.

You have a right to this information and we want to make sure that the report is interesting and relevant.

I am particularly pleased that we have had tenant input in shaping the report and this will continue as we publish this information annually in the future.

Finally, we want you to feel safe and happy in your home and to live in a neighbourhood that you can be proud of. We know that we do not always get it right first time but our commitment is to listen and to continuously improve. Your feedback on the content of this report and on our services is very welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Gillian Douglas'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Gillian Douglas**  
Director of Housing

# Welcome



## Dear Tenant,

As Cabinet Member for Housing, I am strongly committed to making sure that you receive a responsive and excellent service from the council.

The council is very proud to have 28,000 homes in its stock across the borough, this includes the private finance initiative area of Harvills Hawthorn managed by Riverside Housing. But with that comes huge responsibilities to you as tenants. This report is about feeding back to you on our performance and being transparent about how we are managing and improving council homes, including where we need to do better.

We know that there is a huge demand for affordable rented housing and are working hard to deliver more new build housing in the borough. At the same time we will continue to invest in the existing stock to raise quality, improve the energy efficiency of homes and ensure homes are safe.

We welcome your involvement and feedback and look forward to working with you to make sure that Sandwell tenants receive the best possible services.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C.S Padda". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Councillor Charn Singh Padda**  
Cabinet Member for Housing



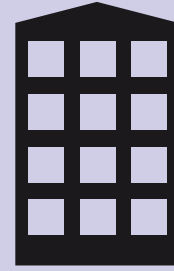


At the end of the 2021/22 financial year we managed a total of 27,307\* properties across the borough offering a range of houses, flats, bungalows and maisonettes for our tenants to call home.

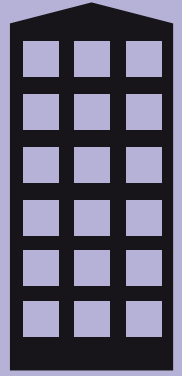
\*This excludes the private finance initiative area of Harvills Hawthorn managed by Riverside Housing.



**14,498**  
HOUSES



**6,425**  
LOW-RISE  
FLATS



**4,258**  
HIGH-RISE  
FLATS



**1,474**  
BUNGALOWS



**652**  
MAISONETTES

By 2030, we aim to have 8,000 more new homes in the borough. This will be a mix of council house building, homes built by registered housing providers and the private sector.

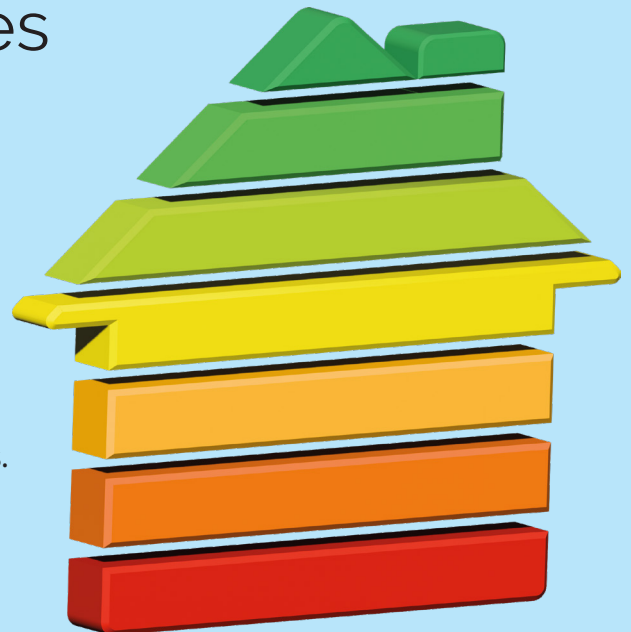
## Energy efficiency of homes

As of the end of the 2021/22 financial year, around 50% of our homes had an energy efficiency certificate of C or above.

As part of the council's improvement programme, our energy efficiency programme aims to ensure that all council homes benefit from affordable and efficient heating systems and projects to deliver energy efficiency measures.

Projects to improve energy efficiency include installing roof and external wall insulation and replacing windows and doors.

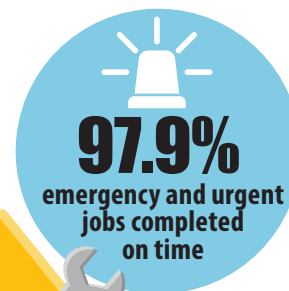
We're proposing to install energy efficiency measures to 402 properties in 2022/23.



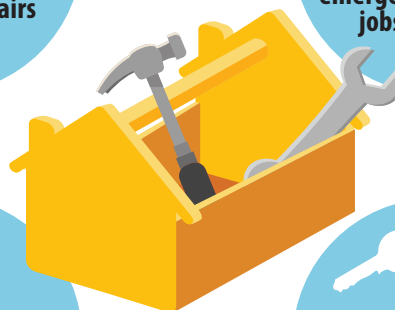
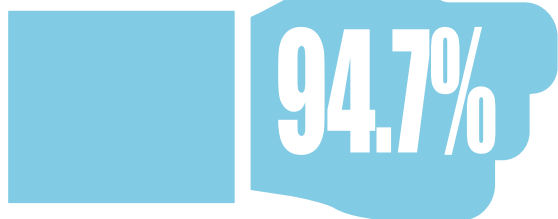
**£1.36 million**  
was invested in installing  
energy efficiency measures to...

**129**  in  
PROPERTIES 2021/22

Despite the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, front-line repairs teams continued to deliver core services including completing more than 3,000 emergency/urgent repairs per month and repairing over 140 empty properties per month for new tenants.



**94.7% of tenants were satisfied with the completed repair**

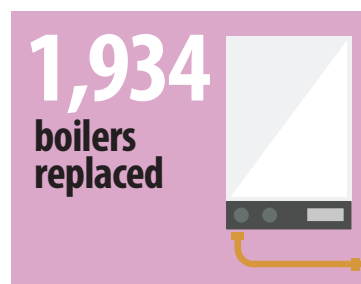
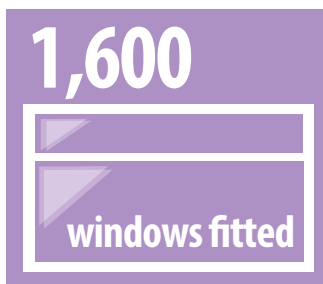
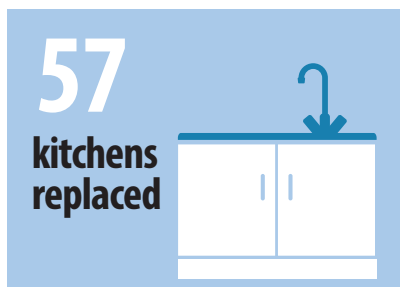


At present we have 19% of tenants who regularly use the MySandwell portal to report repairs. We encourage tenants who can do so to report repairs using the MySandwell portal <https://my.sandwell.gov.uk>

For more information around the maintenance of your home, the repairs process and advice around maintaining your own home follow this link to watch the council's repairs videos: <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/RepairsVideos>

## Investing in your home

We are committed to investing in homes, communities and neighbourhoods across Sandwell. In 2021/22 our improvement programmes carried out work on 3,766 properties. This included:









Our improvement programme assesses each home individually to determine what improvements can be carried out and to offer the best solution for that property. Carrying out improvement works reduces the demand for day-to-day repairs and is one of the most cost-effective ways of keeping properties in a good state of repair.

In 2022/23 we will carry out external improvement works to 859 properties, boilers will be replaced in 1,800 properties and composite front/rear doors will be installed to approximately 10,000 properties. So far, internal improvement works are planned to be carried out to 182 properties. This includes heating installations, rewiring and kitchen and bathroom replacements.

# Keeping your home safe

The safety of our tenants is important to us and is one of our top priorities. Sandwell adopts a robust approach to managing safety for residents particularly in relation to risks associated with the 'big six' compliance areas which are gas safety, electrical safety, fire safety, asbestos safety, water hygiene and lift safety.

<b>GAS SAFETY</b> 	<p>We have a legal duty to ensure each of our domestic properties with a gas appliance is inspected annually to provide a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR).</p> <p><b>99.7%</b> of properties have a valid LGSR, this rises to 100% with the inclusion of properties where legal proceedings to gain access have started.</p>
<b>ELECTRICAL SAFETY</b> 	<p>It is good practice to provide a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition Report (DEICR) within each of our domestic properties every five years. We are concentrating resources on completing missing and older DEICRs this year, with a target to achieve 100% compliance by December 2022.</p> <p><b>76.8%</b> of properties have a valid five-year safety inspection report for electrical installation.</p>
<b>FIRE SAFETY</b> 	<p>We have a legal duty to have an up-to-date fire risk assessment for each of our purpose-built blocks of flats.</p> <p><b>100%</b> of purpose-built flats have an up-to-date fire safety risk assessment.</p>
<b>ASBESTOS SAFETY</b> 	<p>Under the Control of Asbestos Regulations, we have a legal duty to manage asbestos and carry out cyclical inspections in communal areas of blocks of flats, such as foyers, lifts, stairs and lobbies.</p> <p><b>100%</b> of blocks of flats have an up-to-date re-inspection for asbestos-containing materials.</p>
<b>WATER HYGIENE</b> 	<p>Cyclical water hygiene tests are carried out to premises with communal tanks and sheltered accommodation to prevent legionella and scalding risks.</p> <p><b>100%</b> of qualifying sites have up-to-date water hygiene and legionella prevention risk assessments.</p>
<b>LIFT SAFETY</b> 	<p>We are responsible for maintaining passenger lifts in blocks of flats and for carrying out periodic thorough examinations and inspections to ensure those lifts operate safely.</p> <p><b>99.4%</b> of passenger lifts have a valid safety inspection report. Safety inspections are undertaken on a rolling programme. Since the March 2022 snapshot, we are now 100% compliant.</p>

## Help us to help keep you safe – by giving us access to your home when we need it

As part of your tenancy agreement there are times when we need to access your home to carry out inspections, repairs or servicing to your gas and electrical appliances.

This ensures the safety of our properties and the safety of you and your family as our tenants.

We always try to give you as much notice as possible. Please try and keep the appointment made for you and if you have to cancel, please contact us as soon as possible so we can rearrange it.



## BUILDING SAFETY



We aim to maintain our buildings to the highest standards by carrying out regular checks and audits and following best practice in the social housing sector.

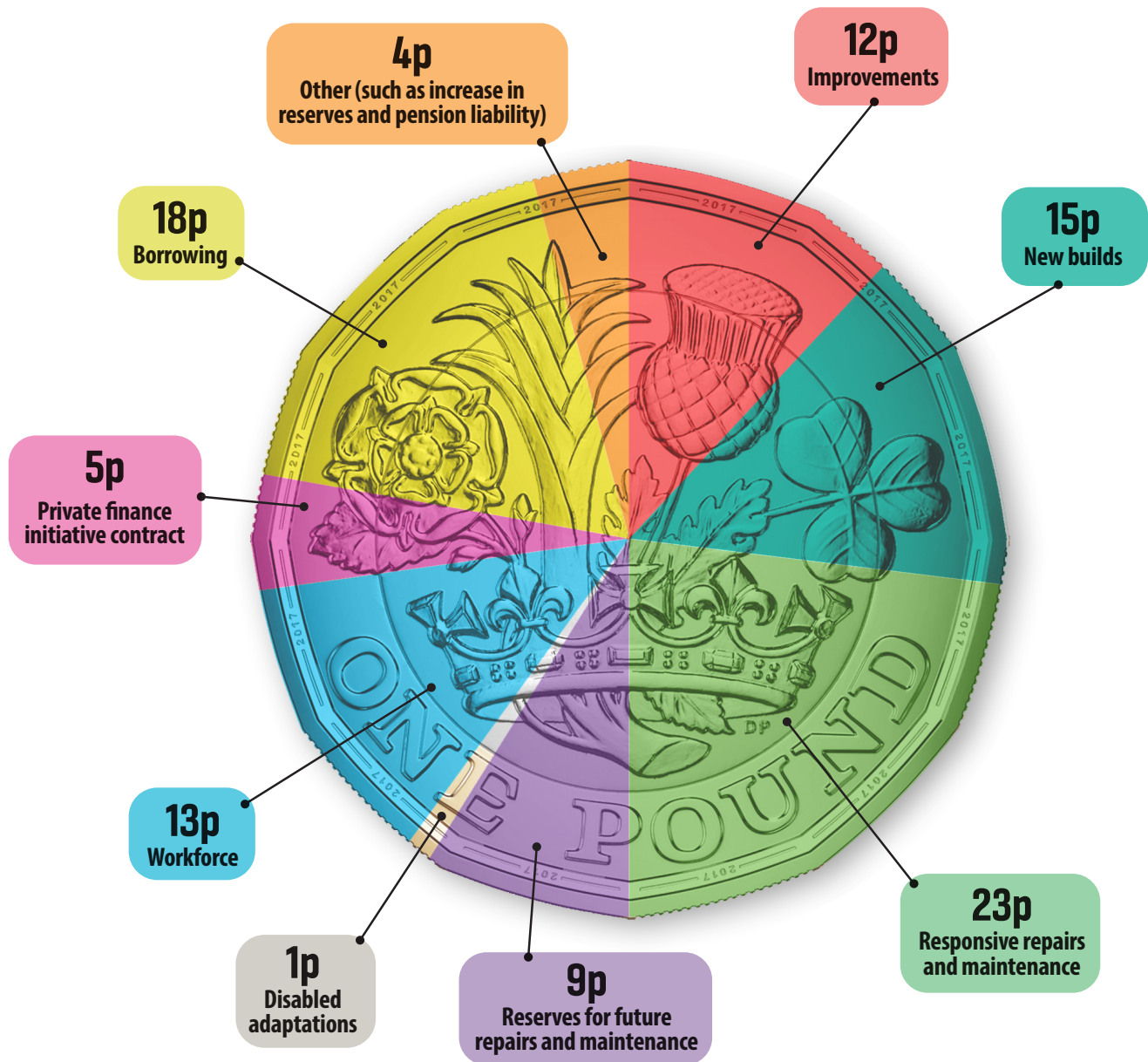
Tenants living in our high-rise blocks will benefit from our investment in new sprinkler systems.

This will take some time to roll out, we will be starting in 2023.

At the time of publication of this annual report our 2021/22 financial accounts were not finalised, and we will publish information on the 2021/22 financial year when available. The information below provides an overview of our income and expenditure in the 2020/21 financial year.

In 2020/21 we collected approximately £120 million of income from rent and service charges, which is our main source of income. We also received capital finances from the sale of properties via the Right to Buy scheme, government grants and some borrowing.

## For every £1 collected we spent...



### Right to Buy

In 2021/22, 288 houses and flats were sold under Right to Buy, generating £19.3 million of income.

Right to Buy helps tenants to buy their homes at a discounted rate, dependent on the length of time they have been tenants at the property.

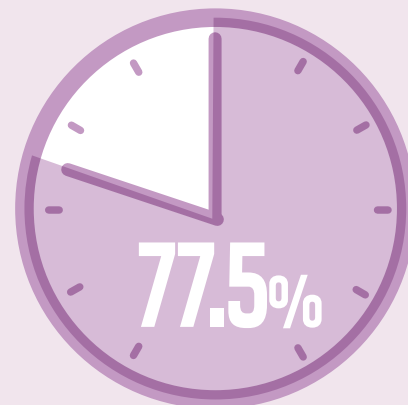
For more information about Right to Buy visit: <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/RighttoBuy>



We value all your feedback on the services we deliver to tenants. We want to hear from you if something has gone wrong.

**77.5%** of complaints are resolved within timescales

Your comments, complaints and compliments help us to learn and improve our services.



## Learning from your complaints we have:



provided 'how to' videos to help tenants with issues such as condensation in their properties;



reviewed our customer feedback process to improve communication with customers;



allocated more resources to areas such as homelessness;



addressed any underperformance with staff training;



started quarterly meetings with managers to discuss feedback and share best practice.

**Complaints received increased by 32% in 2021/22**



Our repairs and maintenance service received the highest number of complaints (370). This number represents 0.25% of all the works carried out at our properties.



In common with the social housing sector nationally, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic means we have a backlog of non-urgent repairs, and it's taking longer for these repairs to be done.

**94.7%**

94.7% of tenants were satisfied with their completed repair in 2021/22.



Our repairs and maintenance teams are working with contractors to tackle the backlog.

## The Social Housing Regulator is asking social landlords to carry out annual tenant satisfaction surveys.



The survey gives you the opportunity to tell us how you rate us as your landlord.

We'll be launching our survey in autumn 2022.

If you're asked to take part, please give us your views and opinions. Your feedback helps us to improve our services to you.

Because all social landlords will be asking their tenants the same questions, you'll be able to see how we are performing compared to others.

We'll publish the results in future editions of our annual report and on our website.




We recognise that the best way of providing services that meet your needs and expectations is to involve tenants in their creation and development. During 2021/22:

45 

community involvement forms were returned by email

250 

community involvement forms were returned by post

53 

scrutiny panel applications were received

40 

tenants were invited to attend Tenant Audit training to carry out inspections to services

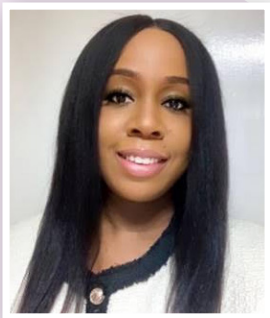
## Housing Scrutiny Group launched making sure tenants' and leaseholders' voices are heard



looking for services that are value for money, high quality and meeting residents' needs



meeting regularly with housing managers and contractors to improve services



Phillippe Brown, Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Group, said:

"We will endeavour to work closely with the diverse communities of Sandwell, the council and government in helping to provide a more effective service for both council tenants and leaseholders in Sandwell.

"It is our duty to ensure we maintain a clear channel of communication to all communities whilst holding those in authority accountable, and allowing the collective voice of Sandwell to be heard.



reviewing and scrutinising services

making sure the council is committed to the Government's new Charter for Social Housing Residents following the Grenfell Tower tragedy



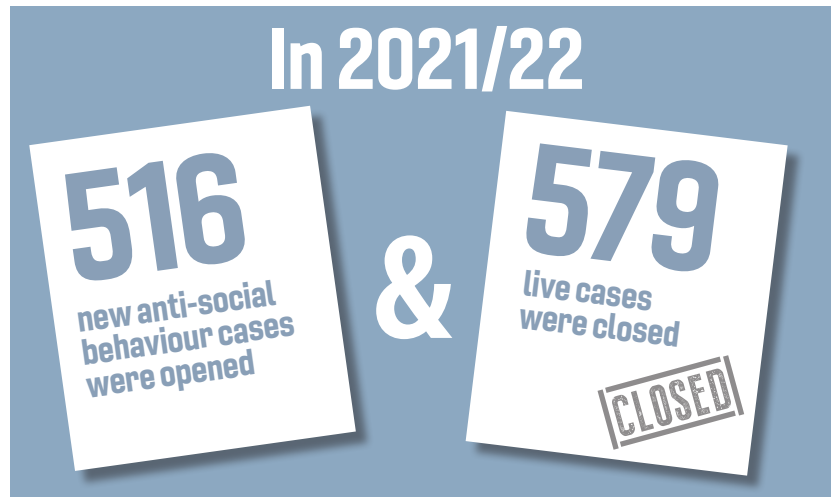
**“ We believe that your voice matters. ”**

If you would like to find out more about our tenant involvement projects, please email: [Comm\\_Partnerships@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Comm_Partnerships@sandwell.gov.uk) or telephone: 0121 569 2537

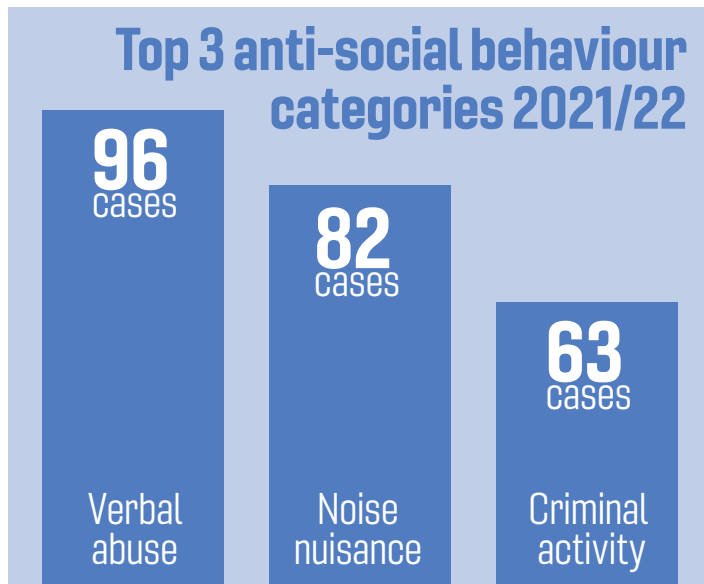
We want our tenants to enjoy living in their neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

Our anti-social behaviour (ASB) team uses a prevention and early intervention approach to resolve ASB cases as quickly as possible using the most appropriate solutions for individual cases.

Early interventions can include: verbal and written warnings, mediation, referrals to partnership agencies and good neighbour agreements.



The top three categories for ASB in 2021/22 were: verbal abuse, noise nuisance and criminal activity.



**In 2021/22...**

**138 cases** were resolved by warning letters



**120 cases** were resolved by multi-agency partnership working



**62 cases** were resolved by verbal warnings



## Community Trigger

Community Trigger gives communities and victims of anti-social behaviour the right to request a review of their case, where they believe they have received an unsatisfactory response.

Community Trigger enables us to investigate cases and put things right where they have gone wrong, putting victims first and ensuring they receive the right level of support and outcome for their case.

### Community Trigger outcomes

<b>7</b>	Withdrawn/cancelled
<b>2</b>	Pending decision
<b>37</b>	No action required
<b>1</b>	Action required



# Delivering services and looking forward

## During the next 12 months we expect the Government to introduce their new Consumer Standards for Housing.

These will set out the minimum standards you should expect from us as your landlord.

We are already working hard to transform our services so they will be recognised by you as excellent.

## Here are some things to look out for in 2022/2023.

### Home Checks



#### We are:

- rolling out a programme of proactive home visits, aiming to visit all our customers at least once in the next three years;
- visiting more often than this if you need more advice, support or assistance;
- making sure everything is as it should be with your home;
- updating you on things you need to know about your tenancy and our services;
- getting positive feedback from the more than 1,000 Home Checks we've already carried out.

### Your Voice Matters

**We promise to listen and act on your feedback.**



#### We are:

- developing more opportunities for you to tell us what you think about the services we offer, such as joining our new Task and Finish Groups to deliver our service improvement plans;
- inviting you to help us co-design solutions for things we can improve;
- involving you in our new Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group, Tenant Auditors team and in resolving complaints;
- celebrating those of you who work tirelessly at grass roots level supporting your neighbours and communities;
- launching our new annual tenant satisfaction survey in the autumn, as well as asking for more feedback (if you want to give it) after more routine transactions.

**We transformed the way we deliver many of our services to you during the pandemic.**



#### We know:

- lots of you are already using these services;
- that some of you prefer to phone and speak to us in person;
- a small number of you also value the opportunity to drop into one of our receptions to carry out your transaction.

We'll be making further improvements to our on-line services, making it the easiest way to transact with us, so you're not in a queue or on hold. But we'll also make sure you can still contact us by phone or in person if you prefer it that way.

## Your safety matters

Making sure your homes and communities are safe places to live is a priority for us.

We are confident but not complacent that the work we do each and every day from regular estate inspections to responding to incidents of anti-social behaviour will continue to keep you safe from any risk of harm.

We will continue to work proactively in spotting risks and hazards at the earliest opportunity and apply effective interventions.

Here are some areas we are working on to further improve your safety:



### Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We are reviewing our ASB policy, rolling out CCTV/ concierge services to all high-rise blocks and investing in training for officers who respond to ASB incidents and reports.



### Safeguarding

We are developing the use of data and systems to trigger earlier interventions for households where vulnerable adults or children may be at risk of harm.



We are determined to do everything we can at a local level to support tenants as the cost of living rises.



Support to make the most of your money and find help if you need it

You can find contact details/links to useful information, advice and support at <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/costoflivinghelp>



#### Energy saving tips

We know energy bills are going up. For tips on how to reduce your bills and be more energy efficient go to <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/energysavingtips>

**CONTACT  
WELFARE RIGHTS**

#### Benefits advice

You can contact the Welfare Rights advice line on **0121 569 3158** or go to <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/welfarerights>



#### Universal Credit

For advice and support if you are applying for or receive Universal Credit go to <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/universalcredit>



## SANDWELL HOUSING SERVICES



#### You can now report a repair using your MySandwell account.

Log in or register for a MySandwell account if you don't already have one, and use our new system to report your repair at <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/repairs>

We have updated our Tenant Handbook which has lots of useful information about your home and information about the services on offer to you. You can access the handbook by scanning the QR code or go to <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/tenanthandbook>



If you would like to get involved with our tenant involvement projects please email [Comm\\_Partnerships@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Comm_Partnerships@sandwell.gov.uk) or telephone **0121 569 2537**



If you need to speak to someone, we've now got more housing specialists at our customer contact centre so we can answer your call more quickly and answer any questions straightaway instead of you having to wait for a call back.

For housing repairs – call **0121 569 6000**  
For all other enquiries – call **0121 368 1166**

If you have any feedback about this Annual Report for Tenants, please email: [tenants\\_report@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:tenants_report@sandwell.gov.uk)

