

We have **vacancies** at our care home. *A safe caring, homely environment.*

When looking for a care home, you need to feel that the care and services provided meet or exceed your expectations. At Forder Lane House we focus on the individual, their needs, preferences and aspirations. Driven by an individual care plan, our team aims to balance care and support to maintain independence, along with encouragement to lead an active lifestyle wherever possible. Our friendly, homely atmosphere allows each resident to continue their daily life in a dignified way, with a high level of privacy, knowing that care and support is always available.



Please call us for more information 01803 863532



SOUTH DEVON RURAL
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

South Devon Rural Housing Association Limited
Registered England and Wales
South Devon House, Babbage Road, Totnes TQ9 5JA

T. 01803 863550 F. 01803 863685 E-mail: Info@southdevonrural.com
Website: www.southdevonrural.com

We are open from 9.00 am to 5.00pm Monday – Friday

An Exempt Charity. South Devon Rural Housing Association Limited is a registered society under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and The Homes and Communities Agency No. LH0920.



Totnes work hub – a South Devon Rural Housing enterprise

www.totnesworkhub.co.uk



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Summer Newsletter

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July 2017



UC Universal
Credit



Large print
copies available
on request.
Please call 01803
863550





Prime Time, Message from the Chief Executive

I am pleased to inform you the Board of South Devon Rural Housing has approved an ambitious repairs and maintenance budget for the next 4 years. The Association plans to spend over £1 million pounds repairing and maintaining its properties: replacing kitchens, doors, windows and heating systems.

This sum is a significant increase on the amount we'd been able to spend in recent years. It's mainly due to the continued prudent management of our finances and the growth of the size of the Association.

The Association will target those properties which are due for inspection prior to replacement. All properties will be inspected in the financial year (or prior financial year according to timing and resources) they're due for replacement. Subject to positive inspection tenants will be informed of the planned works and consulted upon the choices we are able to offer.

This news should be taken in the context that many housing providers are cutting back on improvements and repairs due to the reduction in rental income imposed by the government on housing associations.

The Association is looking at providing more affordable homes in South Devon and the Board has agreed a development strategy covering the next 5 years requiring around £5,000,000 of funding, £2,000,000 of which we have already secured.

We hope to use our development company, Rural Homes Limited, to build homes for sale so all the profits can be gift aided to South Devon Rural Housing. This should mean a constant flow of income to provide new affordable homes in the future.

The Association now owns or manages around 340 homes and we expect to build another 40 affordable homes in the next few years.

I am also pleased to inform you that we have finally achieved planning on Brimhay (again) and will start work soon on building new homes there.

As always, any comments, suggestions or ideas to info@southdevonrural.com

Best Wishes
Steve Prime (Chief Executive)

We're making some changes

We're always looking at ways to improve our services to residents and are pleased to announce several changes that we hope will help us better meet your needs.

We hope these changes will make it easier and quicker for issues to be resolved. If you have any comments you'd like to make about these changes, we'd love to hear your views. Please get in touch on 01803 863550 or info@southdevonrural.com.

Office opening hours

We often come into the office in the morning to messages from residents who just aren't able to contact us between 9am and 5pm. We want to be available for as many residents as possible and so we're testing new opening hours.

From 31st July 2017 we'll be opening our offices between **8.45am and 4.45pm Monday to Friday**. During these hours our usual services will be available.



Our out of hours' repairs service will continue to be accessible for emergencies when our offices aren't open.

housing@southdevonrural.com

We make our personal email addresses available when we contact you. However, we're mindful that sometimes you may email us directly and we're out of the office or away from our desk.

We don't want you to have to wait for a reply to your query and so we've set up a new inbox for housing queries: housing@southdevonrural.com.

This email address will be monitored throughout the day by our office based staff who will be able reply to you as soon as possible.

Computer access at South Devon House

We have placed a new touchscreen kiosk in the reception area at South Devon House. This computer will be available to tenants who may need to access:

- Council services
- Benefits and debt advice
- Online forms to apply for benefits
- Devon Home Choice or Homeswapper

You'll be able to drop into the office to use the screen during our opening hours. If you'd like assistance from our staff to use it, we'd be happy to help. All we ask is that you contact us in advance to book an appointment.

We hope to increase the services we deliver over time to make this a valuable resource for our tenants.



Critters & Crawlies

Maybe it's because our residents live in rural areas, but we get lots of calls about all kinds of pests causing problems.

We're very fortunate to live in a beautiful part of the country, but that doesn't mean it's always idyllic. In the last few weeks alone we've been contacted about ants, flies, hornets, bees, rats, seagulls and moths!

If you are having a problem with pests there are a number of things you can do. But first you need to know who to contact to help.

Whose responsibility is it?

If you live in a house it's your responsibility to deal with pests inside your home and in your garden.

If you live in a flat and the infestation is inside your home, again it is your responsibility. However, if the pests are in a communal area then it is likely South Devon Rural's responsibility to deal with.

What do I do?

If it's your responsibility to deal with the problem, can it be treated using an off the shelf product from a local store? Ants for example can usually be dealt with in this way.

You should also make sure there isn't a source of food or a nesting place in your garden. Piles of wood make an ideal nesting place and storing your rubbish in closed bins will make your garden less attractive to pests.

If you have a persistent problem, or one you can't deal with yourself, you should contact your local council for advice from the pest control team. There may be a charge for their services if a professional needs to visit your property to treat the problem.

If it's in a communal area, you should contact us at South Devon Rural.



What if some pests are protected by law?

It's true there are times when some pests are protected by law and you should seek advice from your local pest control team if you have any doubts. There are occasions when seagull nests and moths may be protected.

It's better to be safe than sorry, and a call to your local council will be able to help.

It is a common misconception that bees nests are protected by law, they aren't, but the bumble bee is an endangered species so you may not want to kill them.

Is there a humane way of dealing with pests?

Many people dislike pest control measures because they kill the pests. You must deal with pests which cause a health hazard (vermin such as rats) but there are humane ways of dealing with them. Bees for example can be 'rehomed'. Speak to your local council for advice.



Focus on... Welfare Reform

Welfare reform has introduced lots of jargon in the last couple of years. Does anyone remember a time when they hadn't heard of the 'bedroom tax' or the 'benefits cap'?

The reforms have made a big difference to many people's income and changes are being introduced all the time. Several changes have been made recently and so we wanted to take the opportunity to explain some of the reforms recently introduced in our areas.

If you are under 35

If you became a new tenant after April 2016 and are under 35, you will only be able to claim the 'single room rate' from April 2019. This means the government expects you to live in shared housing, rather than rent a flat of your own.

This will only affect you if you're single.

If you're living as a couple and are under 35, or are under 35 and have a child, this change won't affect you.

As single people under 35 will no longer be able to claim enough benefit to cover their rent, we will be checking applicants age when letting properties to make sure they'll be able to cover their rent.

Current tenants may be affected if their circumstances change. If you are under 35 and break up with your partner and don't have children you may not be able to claim enough benefit to cover your rent.

If you claim ESA

The rules around Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) are complicated. A few changes have been made to the rules which may affect claimants.

New ESA claimants who are judged to be able to work will receive a reduced amount of benefit. The benefit they receive will equal what they'd be entitled to if they claimed Job Seeker's Allowance.

ESA claimants who work part time and earn between £20 and £120 per week will be able to continue working and claiming their benefit after 52 weeks. Before April 2017, ESA claimants had to choose whether give up work or their ESA after 52 weeks.

If you're claiming ESA and are sanctioned, from April 2017 you will receive 80% of your benefit during the sanction period. This has increased from 60%.

Tax credits

From April 2017 child tax credits won't be paid for a third child born after 3rd April 2017.

If you're already claiming for more than 2 children, this won't affect you. But if you have two children already and have a third child in the future, you won't receive child tax credits for that third child.

Some exemptions apply to this rule, please check with the Department of Works and Pensions whether you can still apply for a third child born after April 2017.

Want to know more?

This is just a brief taster of the main changes which are likely to affect our residents. More details of changes are available online www.gov.uk/browse/benefits, or pop into your local Citizen's Advice Bureau if you need some advice.

You could also get in touch with us at any time. Please contact our Housing Officer, Sharon Coleman, on 01803 863550.



UC Universal Credit

Universal Credit is coming...

For most of our residents who are claiming benefits, universal credit won't affect you until April 2018. However if you need to make a new claim and are a single person or couple without children, you will be asked to complete a Universal Credit (UC) application form.

Remember UC is only going to affect people of working age. So if you're claiming pension credit (or will be by April 2018) the changes won't affect you.

What difference does Universal Credit make?

When UC is rolled out to all benefits claimants there will be a number of big changes to the way you're paid:

1. All the main benefits will be paid in a single, monthly, lump sum.
2. Housing benefit will be paid directly to you as part of the monthly payment. You can't ask the Local Authority to pay your rent direct to your landlord.
3. All claims will need to be made online, so you'll need access to the internet.
4. All payments will be paid into a bank account.
5. It will take at least 6 weeks to process all new claims (and existing benefits claims moving over to UC) which will mean you won't receive any money for this period.

Are you ready for Universal Credit?

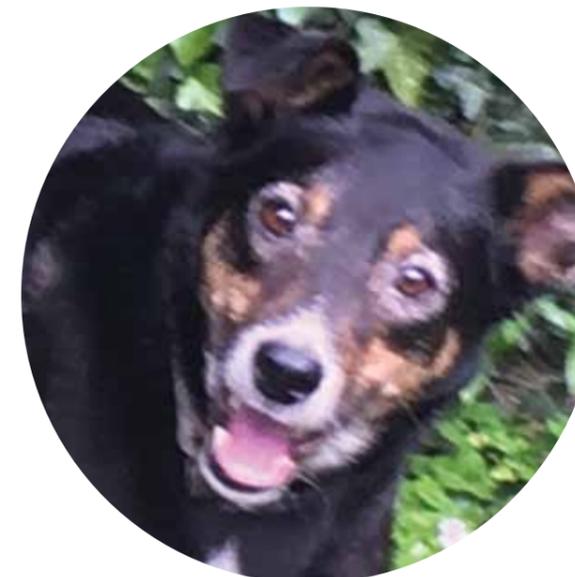
Do you have a bank account that can receive electronic payments?

Do you have access to the internet? Remember help and assistance are often available in Local Authority offices and we have a new touchscreen in our reception area.

Are you confident you can budget monthly? If you need some help with budgeting, let us know and we'll help out. If you've concerns about making sure you pay your rent, call us for advice.

Can you afford to cover all your bills and expenses for the 6 weeks + it will take to process your UC claim? We're advising residents to get ready now by putting some money away weekly. If you'd like advice on preparing for this, please get in touch.

Let's talk about pets



Pets are welcome in our properties provided they're taken care of properly and the property is suitable. Many of our residents have all kinds of pets and they're often just part of the family.

As a landlord we need to know if you're getting a pet. If in doubt, contact us to check if you need permission. We'd never refuse permission without good reason. When we are asked for pet permission we consider:

1. Is your property suitable?

We look at whether you have the space, if there's somewhere for your pet to exercise and how many pets you already have.

2. Can you take care of them?

Some pets need more care and attention than others.

3. Could they cause a nuisance?

We look at whether they're going to cause a lot of noise and if you're prepared to clear up any mess they cause.

If you have a dog

We often get complaints from neighbours about people who don't take care of their dogs properly. Owing a dog is a big responsibility and complaints are often about:

1. Owners who allow their dogs out unsupervised

We often get complaints that owners open their front door and allow their dog out to roam around. If you own a dog you should always take your dog out on a lead, especially in built up areas.

2. Owners who don't clear up after their dogs

If you own a dog, you can get dog waste bags from local stores. You should always pick up after your dog and bin it either in a special dog waste bin (you can usually find them in parks or in other public areas) or in your own bin at home.

3. Dogs are allowed to bark constantly

All dogs will bark. But if the owners are out all day, dogs can cause a nuisance because they're bored.

If you go out and leave your dog alone in the property you should: make sure your dog has lots of toys to play with, and keep him away from the windows so he can't see when people are passing the property.

I'm about to get a pet, what should I do?

Let us know. We'll send a form out for you to complete and will sign it if your property is suitable. We won't be unreasonable, and we rarely refuse permission.



SDR monitor performance in a number of ways, to ensure quality of customer service and value for money is achieved. One of the ways SDR monitors performance is by using Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). This performance is monitored, analysed and acted on by the management team, and also reported to SDR's board.

These indicators cover a number of operational areas, such as repairs, allocations, rent arrears and anti social behaviour.

Please see table below on how SDR are doing on some of the main KPI's. Green indicators show we are meeting or exceeding targets.

Performance Dashboard

	Performance 2016/17	QTR 1 (Apr - Jun)	QTR 2 (July - Sep)	QTR 3 (Oct - Dec)	QTR 4 (Jan - Mar)	Target 2017-18
ASSET MANAGEMENT						
Annual Gas Safety Checks Completed	100%	100%				100%
Emergency Repairs	100%	100%				100%
Urgent Repairs	100%	95%				95%
Repairs/Contractor Satisfaction	98%					90%
RENT ARREARS						
GN Tenant Rent arrears as % of annual debit	0.59%	0.58%				1.25%
ALLOCATION AND VOID MANAGEMENT						
Void loss on homes as a % of gross rent	0.07%	0.21%				1.00%
Average relet time (excluding major works)	13	16				14

Commentary

Over target due to delays in 2 properties to facilitate relocation of Brimhay residents.

Caring Town Information Exchange - now open and happy to help



So I am a Caring Town Connector! What does that mean? I am part of the new Caring Town Information Exchange based in the Mansion on Fore Street in Totnes, a signposting service for local people around health, care and wellbeing needs.

Who do we deliver services to?

A huge variety of people come in (it's not boring - I could chat to people all day). Those without a roof over their head who need somewhere to sleep or take a shower, people who are struggling to pay their bills, those who need help caring for elderly parents, or perhaps they have moved to the area and are simply looking for social activities where they will meet new people.

What we do?

We try to make sure local people know about all the local services and groups that might help them. With no forms to fill in and no waiting times (just drop-in) our service is easy to access.

We can help people access of kinds of local activities such as pot luck suppers to gardening for health, to walking and talking, to arts events, meditation, therapies, skill shares, business support groups, or exercise classes for anyone and everyone. It is a growing list!

Why I'm a Caring Town Connector

I have worked with a wide variety of people and am aware of many of the issues that can make life difficult. It is an area that interests me in that it affects so many people who often suffer in silence. I have discovered listening to people who don't feel listened to is a large part of the role - and I am always happy to do that.

How to find us

If you have a question or need help with something for you, a friend or a neighbour perhaps, do come and see us and we will try and point you in the direction.

You can find us (my colleague Denise and I) at the Mansion between 10.30am and 2.30pm every day except Wednesday and Sunday. Come in and say hello. Sit down and have a chat if you feel like it. We will listen and try to help.

Victoria Patch

connector@caringtown.org.uk
01803 864450

The Caring Town Information Exchange is a partnership between Caring Town and Totnes Town Council. Find out more about the other work of Caring Town (a network of local organisations) at www.caringtown.org.uk



Victoria Patch