

# **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR RESIDENTS**

**06<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

## **How is South Devon Rural responding to the spread of the Covid-19 virus?**

We are well prepared for disruption caused by the virus and have good business continuity arrangements in place. Our response will be '*business as usual*', however, we have already taken some steps to prioritise the safety of residents and staff along with core business functions. Our aim will be to minimise disruption to our everyday activity and services. Where there is disruption, we would ask for your understanding and patience.

## **Is South Devon Rural's office still open?**

Our office remain closed, however all staff are working remotely from home. This decision will help to reduce the risk to staff of catching or passing on the virus. It will also help to safeguard the services we offer to residents and core business functions.

Over the past year, we have introduced new ways of digital working, including the online portal for residents. All of this means we are well prepared.

## **Should I sign-up to the online resident portal?**

If you have not already done so, we would ask that you now sign-up to use the online resident portal. The portal offers a range of self-service options and will help to minimise calls during what we expect to be a busy and pressurised time.

If you have access to a smartphone, tablet or computer, you can access many of SDR's services online via our secure "My Tenancy" portal. You can report a repair and track its progress, look up your rent account, see recent transactions or print a rent statement. If you would like to find out more about how "My Tenancy" please contact us for more information.

## **Will South Devon Rural staff and contractors still attend appointments?**

Yes, but only when these are necessary and safe. We may decide to offer alternative options in place of physical meetings, such as telephone or video. We have checked the business continuity arrangements for our main contract partners and are satisfied that they are well prepared. Some contractors are already limiting the visits their operatives make to non-urgent repairs, to safeguard longer-term services focussed on emergency and safety activity. This may mean that they are slower to respond to non-urgent repairs than usual.

## **Have contact numbers for South Devon Rural changed?**

No. All the contact numbers are the same. Our phone systems allow us to re-direct phone lines to different locations, though it may take us longer to answer calls due to staffing and service pressures. To help us deal with this, residents should use the online resident portal service as much as possible.

**Can I still report repairs in the usual way?**

Yes, but to help us manage pressures, please consider delaying reporting any non-urgent repairs. During this current Lockdown, we will only carry out emergency and urgent repairs, that relate to health and safety. You can still report non urgent repairs in the usual way, however they will be postponed until the Lockdown rules are lifted.

**Do I need to tell South Devon Rural if I have symptoms or I have Covid-19?**

If you display any symptoms like those of the virus you should seek immediate medical advice and follow guidance available from public authorities. Current advice can be found on the [NHS](#) website.

If you have an appointment with South Devon Rural staff or contractors, you should let us know if you display any symptoms of the virus or are self isolating so we can rearrange this for a later date, when it would be safe to attend. If the appointment is to resolve an emergency, staff will talk through options with you based on the circumstances.

**I am calling on behalf of a relative, friend or neighbour who is a resident. Will South Devon Rural be able to talk with me?**

Data protection restrictions can make it difficult for South Devon Rural to talk about residents without consent. The best approach would be to call with the resident present, so they can verify that you have their consent. We will always try and be as helpful to callers as we can.

**What should I do if I am struggling to pay my rent?**

We recognise that one impact of the virus might be on the ability to work or access financial support. If you are having any problems paying your rent discuss these with our Housing Team, who can offer further advice based on your circumstances.

**How will South Devon Rural keep me updated with any changes to its response?**

We will be posting future updates on our website so please check this regularly.

*Online links to useful information:*

Advice published by the Government is available from the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Advice published by the NHS is available from the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Advice published by the Citizen Advice Bureau is available from the following link: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/getting-financial-advice/>

Advice published by the Red Cross, including how you can support through volunteer work, is available from the following link: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/uk-emergency-response/coronavirus>