

Dear

**CORONAVIRUS: COVID 19 UPDATE**

I wanted to write to you personally to reassure you that in these uncertain times, our first priority here at South Devon Rural is looking after the health and wellbeing of our staff and residents. The current situation we all find ourselves in is changing on a daily basis and we are closely monitoring the guidance being issued by Public Health England.

You will have already received from us last week answers to some Frequently Asked Questions about our response to the virus outbreak, but many of you have contacted us asking for more information and a further set of questions and answers is enclosed with this letter.

We are currently doing everything we can to maintain 'Business as Usual', with increased hygiene precautions in our offices and supporting our staff to be able to work from home. However over the coming weeks it will be inevitable that we will need to make changes to our service and we really appreciate your patience and understanding.

We also understand that for some of our residents there will be an immediate financial impact due to the Coronavirus and that you might now be facing employment uncertainties and some difficult financial decisions. We will work to support you and keep you safely in your home.

For those of you who are over 70 and therefore have been asked to self isolate, a member of our staff will be in contact with you in the coming days to ensure you are ok and check whether there is anything practical we can do to help. However, for any of our tenants, if you have any questions, are concerned about anything or are simply lonely and would like a chat with someone, then please call us.

Finally, we are aware that many small rural communities have set-up local support groups to help affected households. I would ask all residents to think about their neighbours, particularly the elderly, vulnerable and those living alone at this time. They will need your help and support.

We will issue regular updates to make sure you are kept up to date with changes you need to be aware of.

Yours sincerely

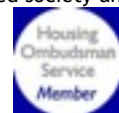


ALISON COOK  
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SOUTH DEVON RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

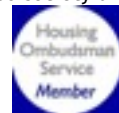
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## Questions and Answers

### How do I register for the 'My Tenancy' portal?

If you have not already done so, we would ask that you now sign-up to use the online resident portal.

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' works please contact us for more information.

### How do I tell South Devon Rural if I am self-isolating?

It would help us to know if you are self-isolating. You can phone us on our office number or email us at: [info@southdevonrural.com](mailto:info@southdevonrural.com). We have also introduced some extra protocols for staff, which means they will ask you some added questions when you call to request a visit. Please always be clear and honest in your response to these extra questions.

If you display any symptoms like those of the virus you should follow guidance available from public authorities. The advice is subject to change and can be seen on the [NHS website](#).

### What should I do if I am worried about how I will pay my rent?

We recognise that one impact of the virus might be on your ability to work or access financial support. If you are having any problems paying your rent please call us and discuss these with our Housing Team who can offer further advice based on your circumstances. The rent setting policy applied by South Devon Rural means that none of our rents are above the level at which you will be able to receive financial support from the Government via Housing benefit or the rent element of Universal Credit. If you are unsure about how to claim then we will be able to help.

### I normally pay my rent at the post office or a pay point - Can I still do this?

Currently post offices and many shops with pay point are still open but if you are self isolating and can't or don't want to leave your home then there are other ways to pay.

You can ring us and pay by debit or credit card - we will take your details over the phone and enter them directly onto the Allpay portal. No details are recorded in any way by us.

You can pay by standing order - which you may be able to set up with online banking.



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## SOUTH DEVON RURAL

You can pay by faster payment using online banking - this will mean you have to login each time you want to make a payment.

You can pay by Direct Debit - you can ring us and give us the details over the phone as long as you don't have a joint account. If you have a joint account we will need to post you a paper form to complete and return to us.

### **Should I still report repairs in the same way?**

Yes, but to help us manage pressures, please consider delaying reporting any non-urgent repairs. We are now only completing those repairs which are an emergency or urgent. Our main maintenance contractors are well prepared. They have already introduced some extra protocols to protect their staff and you. They will let you know what these are in advance.

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

We have asked our staff to not attend face to face meetings unless absolutely necessary. Instead, we will use alternatives arrangements such as telephone or video calling.

### **How will South Devon Rural keep me informed?**

This is the second Q&A for residents. In the future we will use our website and mailings to keep you up-to-date with what we are doing but if you are worried you can always contact us.

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

No. Based on advice from the Government we have taken the decision to close our office. We were well prepared for this decision as our IT and phone systems enable home working for all staff. Phone numbers remain the same. The reality is that residents are unlikely to notice that this change has happened.



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