

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

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Website: www.southdevonrural.com

We are open from 8.45 am to 4.45pm 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

Winter Newsletter

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Winter 2021



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863550



SOUTH DEVON RURAL
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Let's hear it for all the unsung heroes!



We Should Celebrate Angels of 2020

Welcome from SDR Chief Executive Christine Candlish

Surely it's going to be a better year... it has to be, hasn't it?

Before writing this welcome to our first newsletter of 2021, I looked back at the message that I wrote for last January's newsletter. It was so full of positivity and hope for the future – as we had no idea of the magnitude of difficulties we would all face as 2020 unfolded.

Actually, I'm glad I didn't know what lay ahead; sometimes a gradual dawning of challenges makes them easier to cope with – one day at a time. The steady unfolding of the implications of the pandemic for every individual, every business, every charity and especially those in the health and care sectors, has made everyone aware of how dependent we all are – young and old – on each other for good health and, in so many cases, sheer survival.

Each one of us has had to learn to adapt to new ways of doing our jobs, exercising, relaxing and of course seeing our loved-ones. This has been especially true in the care home and social housing sectors, where one-to-one contact between family members is so vital to good mental health and maintaining good spirits.

Good Grace

I want to pay tribute to the strength and resolve of all our tenants, wherever they live, and the good grace with which they have faced the challenges posed by Covid-19.

I also want to thank our suppliers for continuing to maintain stocks of important equipment and goods that we depend on to deliver services to our customers.

Last but by no means least, I wish to thank our wonderful employees for their flexibility and patience as our organisation has adapted and flexed to meet changing circumstances, often at short notice and against demanding odds. You are all heroes!

Although 2020 was one of the hardest in my 30-year housing career, I've been heartened by how people have learned to be more considerate of others and to be more open about their health and wellbeing.

On that note, I'd love to hear about your experiences of the past year: the highs, the lows, tales of community spirit, how you've coped and who and what has made you smile. Maybe there are some unsung heroes out there who deserve some recognition. I'd also like to see some pictures that reflect your year.



Christine Candlish

Your Stories

The reason I'm asking this is because what lies completely at the heart of SDR and everything we do is YOU, our tenants, and I'd love to feature some of your stories and experiences in future newsletters. You can send your stories to me directly via email: Christine@southdevonrural.com

Finally, another quick reminder that our office is still closed to visitors and, due to the national lockdown, we are currently only completing emergency and urgent repairs.

Please see elsewhere in this newsletter (P4) for details of how to contact our repair and maintenance teams in an emergency.

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. I feel encouraged by some of the latest developments that promise to make our lives more comfortable, little by little, during 2021. Here's to a better year for everyone!

Meet Beth, our new Deputy Manager at Forder Lane House

Beth Blamey-Heard joined us in October 2020 as our new Deputy Manager at Forder Lane House Care Home.

She said: "I'm really excited to be working at Forder Lane House as Deputy Manager. It's a lovely home and I've already got to know the staff and residents and their families really well. Everybody has given me a great welcome.

"I have experience and knowledge in the private care sector and I have specialist skills in managing dementia and end-of-life care. I'm looking forward to building on my skills and experience to provide an excellent service and ensuring this is a great place to live for our residents".

In her spare time, Beth enjoys swimming and shopping.



Safety first

Protecting residents and staff is our No. 1 priority

As the global pandemic continues to grab headlines and break records for all the wrong reasons, South Devon Rural Housing Association is sustaining and enhancing measures to minimise risks to the health of its residents and employees.

The charity-based housing association is now entering its second year of dealing with the safety issues posed by the coronavirus and the impact that the threat of infection has had on the everyday business of running this complex operation.

With residents of care homes among the most vulnerable, due to the health risks for people of advancing years, every measure possible has been implemented to safeguard those being cared for at Forder Lane House in Dartington.

SDR's Operations Director, Francis Bourke, said: "From the early days of Covid-19, we put in place extremely robust procedures to ensure the risk of infection to both our existing residents and to our colleagues was minimised."

Infection Control

"We consistently apply infection control procedures and services that meet or exceed both the requirements of our customers and the latest Government guidance. This is achieved through testing, use of the correct PPE, social distancing, hand hygiene, a regimented cleaning regime, controlled visits and safe admissions".

The aim has always been to maximise protection whilst minimising disruption to the normal lives of residents, including visits from family members. SDR reacted quickly to each successive set of Government guidance and lockdown procedures.

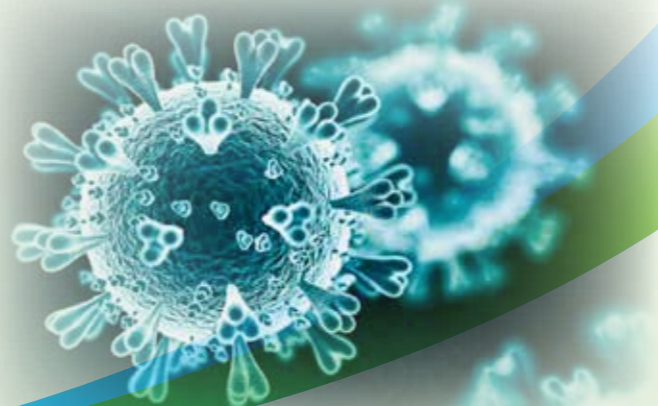
Aware of the benefits that residents gain from seeing relatives, steps were taken to enable family visits where possible, with a dedicated space set aside for face-to-face, socially distanced encounters, followed by stringent room and surface cleaning.

Sadly, as the New Year got under way, a small number of staff members at Forder Lane House tested positive for Covid and immediately started self-isolating at home. The care home went into a pre-planned full lockdown procedure, with all residents isolated in their rooms and attended by staff wearing full hospital-grade PPE.

SDR worked with Public Health England to ensure that Forder Lane House complies with all Government advice for facilities where older people are being cared for and that everything is done to prevent the spread of infection.

Christine Candlish, SDR's Chief Executive, said the housing association's entire operation had been restructured to ensure all its functions continued to work normally whilst protecting employees and members of the public for the duration of the pandemic emergency.

SDR's offices in Totnes are closed, but staff are working from home and are able to deal with emails and telephone calls as before by operating these systems remotely.



Care home staff at Forder Lane House are now wearing full PPE

Online Portal

A dedicated online portal is available for all residents of SDR owned or managed properties, to ensure that services operate as close to normal as possible. Staff and contractors will continue to keep appointments, but these will be conducted remotely where at all possible and will only be face-to-face in exceptional circumstances.

Non-urgent repairs and routine maintenance will be curtailed but only urgent or emergency work will still be done, with contractors following strict safety procedures. For this reason, some work may take longer than normal and waiting times may also be extended.

SDR clients who might be struggling financially or who need advice are advised to contact an adviser by phone, by email or through the portal.

For the latest information, please access our website at: <https://southdevonrural.co.uk/>
The easiest way to continue to contact us is by phone (see office number below) or by email: info@southdevonrural.com

When reporting emergency repairs please make sure they are urgent and are genuine emergency repairs. A non-urgent repair can be reported during normal office hours by calling SDR's office on **01803 863550** Monday to Friday between 8:45am and 4:45pm.

An emergency is defined as something that could cause danger to someone's health or safety, or cause serious damage and destruction to property. Emergency repairs will be carried out within 24 hours.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

- 07824 595262** Out of Hours Helpdesk
- 07540 929569** Jamie Bonner, Operations Director
- 07970 246499** Kevin Wiltshire, Contracts Director
- 07702 541743** Kirk Bailey, Operations Team Leader
- 07926 105069** Ben Arnold, Operations Team Leader
- 07590 057720** Alex Horder, Operations Team Leader





Comfort and Joy: Care home residents enjoy spirit of Christmas...



Christmas was a bit strange for everyone this year. But staff and residents were determined to have a fabulous time over the festive period at our Forder Lane House care home.

On 22 December 2020 we held our staff and residents' Christmas party, where we had pass the parcel, food, drink, fun and games. All staff and residents also sang their hearts out to Christmas carols. There were smiles all round and everybody had a great time.

Presents

On Christmas Day, staff and residents sat down together to enjoy their Christmas dinner – served by new Deputy Manager Beth Blamey-Heard and Operations Director Francis Bourke.

A beautiful Christmas dinner, with all the trimmings, was cooked by Alison, one of our great chefs.

Shortly after the meal, residents opened their presents together.

Throughout the whole Christmas period there was a lovely joyful atmosphere at Forder Lane House.



Happy Xmask...staff wearing some festive items, plus the familiar face-masks of course.

Residents got involved in putting up decorations, watching Christmas films, even doing armchair aerobics to Christmas songs!

Beth Blamey-Heard said:

“I have only been at Forder Lane House since October and so I am a relative newcomer.

“I would just like to mention that every member of staff worked extremely hard over the Christmas period to ensure it was enjoyable for all of our lovely residents and for colleagues too. We're extremely proud of our terrific team”.

Right: Resident Alec Stone opens one of his presents.

Below: Ladies who lunch...four residents enjoy Christmas lunch with all the trimmings – including the traditional paper hats!



Let's have a conversation about condensation...

Is your home suffering from a build-up of condensation? Well, don't get steamed up about it! There are plenty of measures that tenants and property owners can take to reduce or eliminate condensation.

If you're struggling with condensation on your windows, doors or in the air you breathe, you're not alone. One in five homes across the UK suffers from condensation and, with temperatures dropping over the winter months, problems often get worse at this time of year. Condensation is a result of high levels of humid air trapped in a building or property that is unable to escape because of poor ventilation. In most cases it results from everyday living, such as boiling kettles or running a bath.

The warm air in our homes can only hold so much moisture before it condenses onto colder surfaces, especially windows.

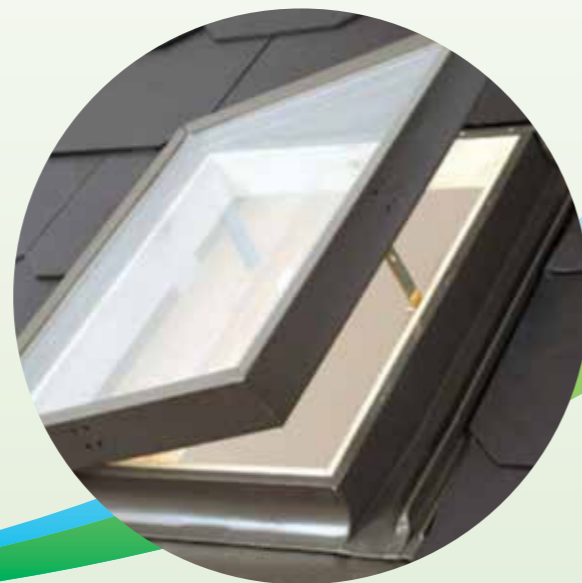
The management and maintenance teams at SDR are happy to offer advice to tenants as to what self-help measures can reduce condensation. Please read on for some of the most effective tips.

However, the problem can usually be minimised or completely overcome by ensuring that the people living in the property follow some of these easy-to-do tips:

1. Keep your property ventilated

Improve the ventilation in your property and you will most likely start to notice a real difference. You may think that double or triple glazing or insulation are the answer, but this can often cause even more moisture to become trapped in our homes.

Finding a happy balance between heat retention and adequate ventilation is the key. In winter, many people choose not to open windows. But this simple low-tech solution is one of the most effective ways to reduce condensation. So choose a window that can let moist air out whilst not letting too much cold air in.



Keep your property ventilated
Produce less moisture inside
Open Windows
Check air vents
Dry clothes outdoors
Lids on pans

2. Produce less moisture inside

The average family of four produces around 14 litres of water vapour each day from basic everyday living. Here are some ways to reduce moisture within your home:

Windows – Open windows when cooking and in the bathroom to prevent steam build-up. Wipe off water from steamed-up windows or sills and wring out the cloth into a sink. Don't dry it on a radiator.

Air vents – Don't block off any existing air vents or fit any new draught-proofing in a poorly ventilated room.

Drying clothes – When possible, always dry clothes outdoors if you can and avoid hanging items on radiators. If drying clothes outside is not an option, aim to dry clothing in a well-ventilated room, with the door closed.

Tumble driers – Make sure your machine is vented to the outside of the building.

Furniture position – In a furnished flat, leave a space between the furniture and the wall, so allowing air to flow easily.

Lids and hoods – Cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down once the water starts to boil. Turn on extractor hoods and keep them on for at least 15 minutes after cooking to prevent steam build-up in the kitchen.

Closing doors – After a bath or shower, keep the door closed for a while. This allows the bathroom to cool naturally and stops steam spreading to other rooms.

Wipe away excess moisture – After any activity that produces excess water, wipe down all cool surfaces with a cloth to prevent mould growth forming, especially in the kitchen and bathroom. These are just some changes you can introduce into your daily life without drastically changing your lifestyle. Simple but effective!

3. Are you aware of the signs?

Condensation is now the most common form of damp in rented properties, but are you aware of how to spot and tackle the early signs of condensation? Mould growth on walls, behind furniture or in the kitchen or bathroom is a strong indicator of condensation issues. It can also form behind wardrobes, especially on north-facing walls. Peeling wallpaper can also be an indicator of too much airborne moisture. But black mould can potentially be a result of other underlying damp problems.

If you're following the advice listed here and you are still having problems, or if you do spot black mould, please let our maintenance and repair teams know, so we can visit and assess what needs to be done.

Contact us by email: info@southdevonrural.com
Or phone us on: **01803 863550** (see also Repair Numbers on Page 4 for urgent assistance).



Artist's impression of the finished building



The 11 apartments are progressing well

'Stepping stone apartments' move another step closer...

Work is progressing well on construction of 11 new 'stepping stone apartments' specially laid out and equipped for people with various levels of learning difficulties on a site at Dartington.

This project, Phase 5 of our Brimhay development scheme, is a collaboration with Devon County Council and South Hams District Council.

Collaboration with the two councils started early in the design process, to ensure that the architect's specification best matches the needs of the new occupants.

The 11 apartments are funded by a £400,000 grant from Homes England and the surplus from selling 12 market-value homes also being built on the Brimhay Gardens site, which will be gift-aided back to SDR by our development arm, Rural Homes Ltd.

Digging foundations for the 11 new flats began in March, but was halted due to the pandemic. Work re-started after the first lockdown ended and we are now hopeful of completion this summer.

Builders are observing strict Covid safety measures but have been able to make good progress despite a short delay in delivery of bespoke window frames. Our photo shows the new building taking shape and starting to look like the artist's impression – see other photo.

Ease of access

Everything from the layout of the building, to ease of access and suitability for a range of mobility issues, has been covered with the help of Devon County Council's Locality Team. This includes wider doorways and reinforced weight-bearing for hoists and mobility aids. SDR is now working with the two councils to identify potential tenants. Many have previously lived with their families and so have limited experience of living independently.

Independence

The new tenants will continue to be supported by their care teams. All will be supported to increase their independence where possible and progress to more standard accommodation, whilst others might need greater levels of support.

Chief Executive Christine Candlish said:

"These apartments are a stepping stone for people with learning difficulties. For many, this will be the first taste of independent living, away from families – a chance to develop and grow in confidence."

"This is the latest example of our ambition to deliver genuinely affordable housing in South Devon for a range of clients with differing needs".



SDR monitor performance in a number of ways, to ensure quality of customer service and value for money is achieved. One of the ways we monitor performance is by using Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). Results from these regular checks on key areas are 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 2019/20	QTR 1 (Apr - Jun)	QTR 2 (July - Sep)	QTR 3 (Oct - Dec)	QTR 4 (Jan - Mar)	Target 2020-21
ASSET MANAGEMENT						
Annual Gas Safety Checks Completed	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%
Emergency Repairs	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%
Urgent Repairs	100%	100%	100%	100%		95%
Repairs/Contractor Satisfaction	97%					90%
RENT ARREARS						
GN Tenant Rent arrears as % of annual debit	0.58%	0.60%	0.57%	0.63%		1.00%
ALLOCATION AND VOID MANAGEMENT						
Void loss on homes as a % of gross rent	0.17%	0.48%	0.26%	0.07%		1.00%
Average relet time (excluding major works)	14	52	36	29		14

Out of target, due to delays in Covid deep cleans and repairs.