

Mid Devon Housing News



@MidDevonHousing
Winter 2023
Edition 7

A warm welcome

Welcome to our Winter 2023 edition of Mid Devon Housing News, where we share the latest updates from our housing service and the work we have been doing in our communities. In this edition, you'll find information on our new housing developments, the Household Support Fund, a review of the tenancy agreements we offer, winter wellness and much more.

Despite challenging weather conditions, we successfully completed our Autumn Neighbourhood Walkabouts. We'd like to extend our gratitude to the tenants, councillors, and agencies who accompanied us during these walkabouts and we look forward to seeing you again in the spring!

Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey has been completed, and we would like to thank everyone who participated, your feedback is essential in shaping Mid Devon Housing. We are currently analysing the results, which will be shared on our website in spring 2024, in our Spring Newsletter and Annual Report.

As we enter the holiday season, we'd like to extend our warmest wishes to you all. We're aware that this can be a stressful time for many people, and we encourage you to seek financial and local support if you need it. Please refer to the financial help page of the newsletter for more information.

We hope you have a wonderful festive season and a fantastic 2024.



We recently stumbled upon one of our resident's lovely gardens and couldn't resist sharing it with you! Do you have a garden that you're proud of? Let us know - we'd love to hear from you.



MDDC Christmas Opening Times

The office will be closed from 5pm on the 22nd December until 9am on the 2nd January 2024. If you have an emergency in that time please call our out of hours number on **01884 255255**.

IMPORTANT

WE ARE THINKING OF CHANGING THE TENANCIES WE OFFER. HEAD TO PAGE 2 TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SAY ON OUR TENURE REFORM



TENURE REFORM... What is this?

For many years now, we have used flexible tenancies. These are fixed term tenancies, lasting either two or five years. In the run up to the end of the tenancy term, the circumstances of the householder are reviewed and, if these have changed, MDH may decide not to issue a new tenancy.

We are considering whether to continue using this tenancy type and we want to give you an opportunity to give us feedback about the use of these tenancies, and other potential changes to our standard conditions of tenancy. We are reviewing our tenancy policy and our agreement and, as part of this, we want to understand what you, the people who live in the homes that we manage, think about the use of fixed term tenancies. We know that many of you will also have a view on the terms and conditions of tenancy and we would like to hear about any particular issues.

To read more about the project and find out why flexible tenancies were introduced, why we want tenants involved and what the possible outcomes are for the project, scan the QR code on the right hand side or head to our consultation hub on the website:

www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/mid-devon-housing/your-community/consultation-hub/



Have your say

There are lots of ways to get involved with the project depending on the level you are comfortable with:

- Join our focus group in January 2024. We would like to meet with tenants to discuss their views on flexible tenancies and feed this back to Councillors. Call us or email to register your interest using the details below.
- Scan the QR code, sign up to Let's Talk Mid Devon and complete our poll or forum
- Attend one of our Housing Matters events in Crediton, Cullompton or Tiverton (keep an eye out on our website and social media for upcoming dates)
- Call us on 01884 255255
- Email us on tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk

NEW HOMES IN MID DEVON



St Andrews Estate, Cullompton in September 2023 with the first delivery of the modular pods



We are thrilled to announce that our new development at St Andrews in Cullompton is nearing completion. In addition, we are delighted to have received further funding from HM Government through the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF2). This funding will enable us to bring surplus land for new homes. We have secured funding for six projects, including School Close in Bampton, Eastlands in Hemyock, Crofts in Sandford, Beech Road and Holly Road in Tiverton, and College Green in Uffculme. When combined, these sites will provide 50 new council homes within Mid Devon's housing stock for social rent.

Events

What's happening in your community?

DIGITAL ACCESS



DROP IN SESSIONS

Do you need help and support to get online? Gain digital confidence and learn how to use your smartphone, set up an email address or complete an online form. We offer free digital drop in sessions every other Thursday at Tiverton Library from 2pm until 4pm. 2024 upcoming dates:

4th Jan, 18th Jan, 1st Feb, 15th Feb



MDH JOIN CULLOMPTON POLICE STREET SURGERIES

You can find us at Tesco in Cullompton, usually within the first week of the month. Confirmed dates are published on our Social media each month @middevonhousing



WINTER WARMERS

Join our team for a cuppa and chat in a warm space. We currently have two community cuppa events held in Tiverton and CREDITON:

CREDITON

First Wednesday of the month
10.30am - 12.00pm
Elephant on The Green
14 St Lawrence Green,
CREDITON,
EX17 3LL

TIVERTON

Every Thursday
10.30am - 12.00pm
Westfield Road Common
Room, Tiverton
EX16 5EU



HOUSING MATTERS

During September we gave tenants the opportunity to meet the Operations Managers for Housing Services. As the roadshow hit Tiverton, CREDITON, and the virtual world, we answered your questions, sorted your housing issues and addressed all your concerns.

Keep a close eye on our social media pages for more Housing Matters events popping up in early 2024.

AUTUMN 2023 NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKABOUTS...

Thank you to everyone that came to say hello to us or joined in on our Autumn Neighbourhood Walkabouts. We have wrapped up another successful series and we will be back again in spring 2024. We visit each area in Mid Devon where we have properties twice a year to ensure our neighbourhoods are safe, our properties, communal areas and open spaces are well maintained, to ensure tenants have the opportunity to engage with their Neighbourhood Officer, to support the wider tenant community and identify areas for improvement.



Winter Wellness



Keep your home warm

Your main living room should be between 18°C to 21°C and the rest of the house at a minimum of 16°C. If you are struggling, we can help you with your energy bills and food costs through our Household Support Fund. You will need to apply on our website here: www.middevon.gov.uk/do-it-nline/benefits/household-support-fund/ Find out more about financial help on page 7.

Warm Spaces

- Tiverton, Crediton and Cullompton libraries
- Join our Winter Warmer in Tiverton once a week and Crediton once a month. Details on the previous page
- Uffculme: Free hot drinks, soup and a roll every other Friday 10-4. Square Corner, EX15 3AA
- Bradninch: A warm welcome, free soup/sandwich from 10-2, St Disen's Hall, Fore St, Bradninch
- Copplestone - Thursdays Warm Space Cafe, 9-12 or 12-6. Copplestone Methodist Church, EX17 5NH EX17 5NH

Top tips

- You can use a hot-water bottle or electric blanket to keep warm while you are in bed, but do NOT use both at the same time.
- Eat well. Food is energy, which helps to keep your body warm. Try to have hot meals and drinks.
- Wrap up warm. A few thin layers of clothing will keep you warmer than one thick layer. Shawls or blankets will help when sitting.
- If you can, keep active round the house. This will help to keep your joints moving and keep you warm

Helping elderly and vulnerable neighbours

Please check on your elderly and vulnerable neighbours to see if they need help with getting food, medicine or care during cold weather.

Look after your mental health

As temperatures fall and days become shorter, we sometimes find it difficult to do things we normally enjoy. It is always helpful to talk to someone, if you cannot talk to a friend or relative, contact your GP or try a listening service such as Samaritans. They are open 24 hours a day call 116 123 (free)

SAMARITANS

REDUCE THE RISK OF FROZEN PIPES THIS WINTER



- Keep your heating on at regular intervals and make sure to set it on a timer if you are going away.
- Know where your stopcock, that turns off the incoming water supply, is and test that it works. It is usually found under the kitchen sink. If you cannot locate it, give us a call on 01884 255255.
- Let us know about any dripping taps. This will help prevent water from freezing
- If you have external plumbing such as an external tap, ensure that this is well insulated.
- If you have an external / garden WC or hand wash basin, it would be wise to isolate the supply to this ahead of any sub-zero weather. If you don't have a dedicated isolation valve for these items and MDH is responsible for the plumbing, let us know and we can arrange to fit one.

POLICY UPDATE

Our Policy Officer has been working on a number of new policies this year. Did you know we have a consultation hub on our website where you can read and comment on any any open policy consultations?

www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/mid-devon-housing/your-community/consultation-hub

Since April 2023 we have launched the following policies and procedures:

ASB Policy, Neighbourhood Management Policy, Recharges Policy, Damp & Mould Policy, Tenancy Inspection Policy, Disposal of Possession Procedure, Unacceptable Behaviour Procedure and the Mutual Exchange Procedure. We have also just closed the consultation for our new Pets & Animals Policy and our Homes Safety Policy. Keep an eye on social media for updates. You can read all of our policies on our Policies and Strategies page on our website.

WHAT ADULT LEARNING COURSES WOULD YOU BENEFIT FROM?



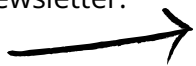
TAKE SURVEY



We would like to partner with Learn Devon to offer our tenants free adult learning courses held at our offices in Tiverton. But first we need to hear from our tenants. What courses would you benefit from? Take part in our survey on Let's Talk Mid Devon or you can send us your feedback in an email or by phone. Our contact details can be found on the last page of the newsletter.



Online survey



www.letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/what-adult-learning-courses-would-you-like-in-tiverton

IMPROVEMENTS WE HAVE MADE

At Mid Devon Housing, we take customer complaints seriously. Each complaint is thoroughly reviewed to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the same problems do not happen again in the future. We were recently asked to improve information on MDH social media pages in regards to Tenancy Home Checks and Tenancy Fraud and to publish the Tenancy Inspection Policy to raise awareness around the above matters. To provide a better service, we have introduced new working practices, updated our permission procedures and letters, and provided clearer information to tenants.

DITCH THE DAMP, MANAGE THE MOULD

Our Technical Support and Repairs Team have been working hard on our new 'Ditch the Damp, Manage the Mould' survey. This project started in May 2023, with a view to contact at least 10% of all tenants by the end of May. We have continued to call tenants, focusing on the areas we suspect are more likely to be experiencing damp or mould. So far, we have spoken to 513 tenants and will continue to do so.

The aim of the project is to find out about the current damp and mould status and offer repairs or advice as required. We have looked into two years worth of repairs history in order to find historic information to help us target our survey calls. The survey has allowed us to receive feedback on what measures to tackle damp or mould in the past have been successful and why some tenants do not contact us to report damp or mould.

This project has also allowed us to identify households experiencing damp or mould which would otherwise be off our radar. We are now able to link damp and mould status to a property type, age, EPC rating etc which helps us to identify patterns and consider a 'fabric first' approach.

If you are experiencing damp or mould in your home please report it to our repairs team on 01884 255255 or email repairs@middevon.gov.uk

Get Involved

We want residents to be at the heart of everything we do. There are a number of ways you can get involved with MDH. Some take more time and effort than others but there should be an opportunity for everyone to get involved at a level that suits them. Please use the contact details at the end of this newsletter to get in touch with our Tenant Involvement Team if you have any questions or would like to volunteer.



The quickest way you can get involved? Follow us on Facebook and X. Here we advertise our events, share news, updates and helpful information each day from Monday-Friday.



@MidDevonHousing



**Let's Talk
Mid Devon**

You can also join our new online engagement hub, Let's Talk Mid Devon where you can take part in surveys, forums and read the latest housing news letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/hub-page/housing



We are Tpas members!

Did you know that we are a member of Tpas? This is the largest tenant engagement organisation in the country and is a network of landlords committed to listening, understanding and being accountable to tenants. As a member it means our tenants can access a range of services to help you become more involved in shaping the services we offer.

Visit www.tpas.org.uk/member-search and search 'Mid Devon' to register yourself and gain access to newsletters, training opportunities and lots more!

Join our Tenure Review Focus Group!

Do you want to help shape how tenancy agreements will look at MDH? Then join our focus group! We are looking to meet with tenants in January 2024. If you are interested in joining please contact the Tenant Involvement Team using the contact details on the last page of this newsletter.

Tenant Champion Roles - Help Make a Difference, Apply Today!

Champion Roles provide tenants with the opportunity to drive service change, from personal experiences or from their desire to promote positive service development. We have 4 champion roles available (more than one person can be involved in each role). There are Publications, Complaints, Estates and Zero Carbon roles available. You can read into the roles further on our new engagement hub - Let's Talk Mid Devon. Scan the QR code above to read more or speak to a member of our team.

PUBLICATIONS

The role is to work with our teams on our resident publications including our Housing Newsletter and Annual Report.

COMPLAINTS

Review our approach to complaints from our tenants, residents and leaseholders. Ensure we are being fair, are putting things right and learning from outcomes.

ESTATES

Monitor grounds maintenance, and if applicable, communal cleaning and communal fire alarm testing, in your area. Carry out inspections and report back to MDH once a month.

ZERO CARBON

We're looking for people who care about the future and are willing to support us in making green improvements to their home and community.

Financial Support

Household Support Fund

October 2023 - March 2024

The Government has allocated more funding to local councils to help those households struggling most with the increase in the cost of living. Funding will be allocated in food and energy vouchers but when the fund has been spent the scheme will close. The amount awarded will depend on the applicant's circumstances and level of assistance needed. Please note that is only one application per household for the funding between now and March.

Top tip: You will need to send a recent bank statement as part of your application. This can only be accepted in PDF format. You can download this from your banking app or bring a printed statement in and we can scan this for you. Not having this will delay your application.

Mid Devon Energy Partnership

CHAT are on hand to help when times get tough. They can offer support and advice on energy, housing, debt and money. There are regular drop in clinics around Mid Devon.

Tiverton: Chat Office, Coggans Well House EX16 6LU. 2nd Tuesday of every month 9.30-12.30 or last Friday of every month, 9.30-12.30.

Tiverton: Eco Hub, Raymond Penny House, EX16 6LU. 2nd and 4th Wednesday every month 10-12 or 1st and 3rd Thursday every month 2-4.

Crediton: Fishtank Cafe/Foodbank. Crediton Congregational Church EX17 3LF. 1st Tuesday of every months 10-12.

Cullompton: St Andrews Coffee Morning, Community Centre, EX15 1JX. Last Friday of the month 10-12.

Willand: Willand Health and Community Centre, EX15 2PL. 1st Thursday every month 9.30-11.30

Pre-Payment Meter Fuel Voucher Scheme (CAB)

If you have prepayment meters and can't afford to top them up, Rural Devon Citizens Advice can help. They may be able to give you fuel vouchers, and their specialist energy team can help you find ways to save money on your household bills.

Call 01237 879 233 or email fuelvouchers@ruraldevoncab.org.uk

Ask your Income Neighbourhood Officer for help

Ask your Income Neighbourhood Officer for advice on options in relation to the cost of living increases which we are aware are currently impacting all of our customers, we aim to see how we can help every individual. Our contact details are at the end of this newsletter. We work with the following agencies in order to help:

CHAT - Churches Housing Action Team - Housing, debt and money advice
www.chatmid.org - 01884 255606 or 0800 0590104

Navigate - Money and Debt Services in Somerset and Devon
www.navigatecharity.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau -
www.citizensadvice.org.uk 0800 144 8848

AGEUK - nationally - Age UK
www.ageuk.org.uk 0800 678 1602

National Debt line, who offer free advice
www.nationaldebtline.org 0808 808 4000

STOP LOAN SHARKS

Intervention . Support . Education

If you have borrowed from a loan shark or are worried about someone else, please get in touch with Stop Loan Sharks: 24/7 Helpline - 0300 555 2222 (Callers Remain Anonymous) www.stoploansharks.co.uk or text 07860 022116

Local Food Banks & Community Larders

Tiverton: Food Bank at CHAT Opening Hours 10-12.00pm weekdays. Coggan's Well House EX16 6LU

Crediton: Food bank at Crediton Congregational Church. Opening hours 9.30-12.30pm Tuesdays and Fridays. 98 High Street, EX17 3LB

Cullompton: Food bank at Cullompton Community Centre. Open Fridays 9-11.30am. EX15 1JX

Lapford: Food bank at The Ark, Lapford, EX17 6PZ. 10-2pm Tuesdays and Fridays or call 01363 83788 and leave a message or email: foodbank@lapfordcc.org.uk

Willand: Free excess food pantry open to all Willand residents. Located on Gables Road near the Health and Community Centre

Silverton: Community larder adjacent to Silverton Community Hall

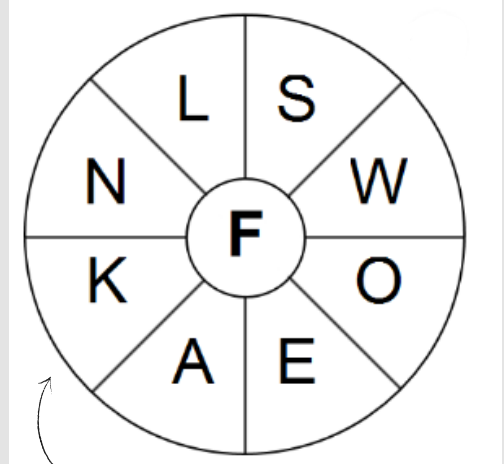
Thorverton: Lucy's Larder, Thorverton Parish Church open 9-4pm daily. EX5 5NT

Stoodleigh - Telephone box where people can share surplus food and other items, and others can pick up. Open access on Rackenford Road

Try to find all of the hidden Winter words in the word search puzzle below. Words can be spelled forwards, backwards, diagonally, up, or down. BLANKET, SCARVES, COLD, SOUP, FROST, SWEATER, IGLOO, WHITE

Just for fun...

V	T	Z	F	K	J	N	A	E	I
S	L	E	J	R	U	M	V	H	G
N	I	S	K	W	O	A	P	M	L
T	N	C	C	N	Q	S	Z	H	O
W	J	A	O	L	A	B	T	J	O
H	K	R	L	P	D	L	E	A	Q
I	L	V	D	U	E	G	B	P	S
T	A	E	J	O	W	T	O	K	G
E	W	S	X	S	N	H	Y	J	B
G	C	R	E	T	A	E	W	S	I



This Winter themed word wheel is made from the letters in the word SNOWFLAKE. Try and make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter F.

If you would like to discuss anything from our Winter Newsletter please get in touch with our friendly team



tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk



01884 255255