



SAXON  
WEALD

# Spotlight

The newsletter for Saxon Weald residents | winter 2024



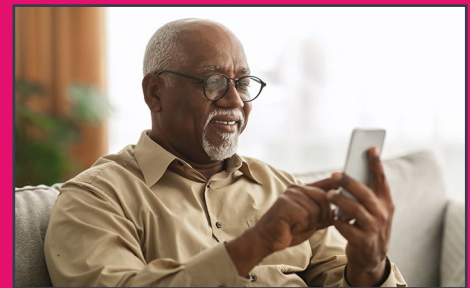
## Chief Executive change

After 24 years at Saxon Weald, Steven Dennis will be stepping down as Chief Executive.



## Festive fun

Find out what's happening in Sussex and Hampshire this Christmas.



## Winter fuel payment

Don't miss out! To qualify, apply for Pension Credit by 21 December 2024.

[www.saxonweald.com](http://www.saxonweald.com)

## A note from our Chair

Winter is a time where the improvements we have made to our repairs and maintenance services could be put to the test. The HomeFix team has worked hard to reduce customer waiting times, so we hope this will improve the service you receive should you need a repair.

In Autumn, the Regulator of Social Housing awarded us a G1/V2/C2 rating based on their inspection. We scored highly for Governance (G), meaning most key areas regarding our customer health and safety are good, and your Board actively monitors our performance. However, there are areas we could improve in financial viability (V) and consumer standards (C). We are using their feedback to make improvements, including:

- Clearing a backlog of overdue fire safety remedial actions as a priority, following an investment in the region of £1.6m.
- Ensuring we hold up to date information for all our customers' homes.
- Speeding up reletting to reduce the number of empty homes.

Other areas on which your Board is focused include:

- The plans to modernise our IT systems, which are intended to make our services easier to access and more efficient.

- The standard of homes when they are first let, which is presently being considered by a group of customer volunteers.



- The significant investment that will be needed to bring all our homes up to a minimum rating "C" for energy performance.
- Recruiting a replacement for Steven Dennis, our Chief Executive, who has decided to step down after 24 years' service at Saxon Weald, leaving large shoes to fill!

There is much still to do, but I believe we are making good progress. As ever, your Board and I continue to value your feedback to help us understand areas for improvement and, hopefully, to hear about things we are getting right!

*Simon Hardwick,*

Saxon Weald's Chair of the Board

## Mutual respect and safety: a commitment to our community

A new piece of legislation, which came into force on 26 October 2024, requires us to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- sexual comments or jokes
- suggestive looks or unwelcome touching
- propositions and sexual advances
- intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life
- sending sexually explicit messages by email, text or social media



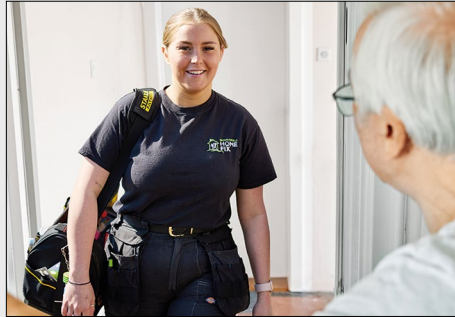
We take this responsibility seriously and have implemented policies and procedures to ensure compliance and protect the rights and dignity of every individual within our community. For more information, please see our updated [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Customer Support team by emailing [hello@saxonweald.com](mailto:hello@saxonweald.com) or calling 01403 226000. Please be assured your query will be dealt with confidentially and sensitively by our staff.



## Looking out for each other

We want all our customers to feel safe and secure in their homes. So, we've recently launched a new initiative called 'Every Visit Counts' which focuses on resident wellbeing. The aim is to proactively support customers who may be experiencing issues at home. During the winter months especially, it's useful to know the signs that someone may be struggling, such as:



- Curtains closed during the day
- Post building up
- Not seeing neighbours for a long time
- Bad smells coming from the property, including bins not being put out for collection

If you're concerned or would like to talk to someone further, please contact your Housing Manager, email [info@saxonweald.com](mailto:info@saxonweald.com), or call 01403 226000.



## What to do if you're experiencing damp and mould

We take reports of damp and mould in our customers' homes seriously. Damp and mould can cause health issues, including breathing difficulties, so it's important to tackle it before it becomes a bigger issue.

While some condensation is normal and unavoidable, excessive moisture can be a sign of an underlying issue. Window condensation can lead to small patches of mould around your window frames. These can be removed with a mould cleaner or white vinegar spray. If this doesn't work, or the problem is on a larger scale, please report it as soon as possible.

You can do so by calling 01403 226000, emailing [homefix@saxonweald.com](mailto:homefix@saxonweald.com), or reporting it via your [MySaxonWeald](#) account.

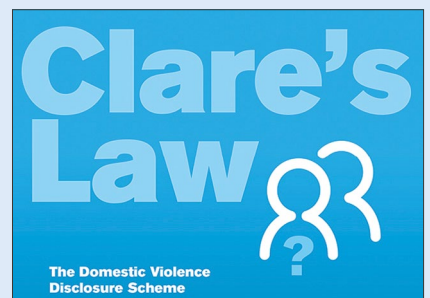


## Clare's Law: there to support you

If you're in a relationship and worried that your partner may have been abusive in the past, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (also known as Clare's Law) is there to support you. It allows you to make enquiries about your current or ex-partner if you are concerned about your safety, even if your relationship has ended.

Search 'Clare's Law' on the Sussex Police website for more information: [www.sussex.police.uk](http://www.sussex.police.uk).

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, please remember, you are not alone. There is a wealth of information available on our website: [www.saxonweald.com/da](http://www.saxonweald.com/da). However, if you feel you are in immediate danger, please call 999.



## The end of an era

Steven Dennis will be stepping down as Chief Executive in March 2025, after 24 years at Saxon Weald. We asked him to share some reflections from



his time at the company, as well as some key milestones from over the years.

### How did your first role at Saxon Weald come about?

Before joining Saxon Weald, I worked as a Project Manager for a software company. Although I really enjoyed what I did, I spent a lot of time travelling and working away from home. My wife was pregnant with our daughter at the time, whilst also looking after our son, so I wanted to be at home more to support her.

I remember sitting in a hotel in Glasgow one day and I came across Saxon Weald's advert for an IT Manager. The role was offering the chance to build the IT system pretty much from scratch, which sounded interesting and exciting. After several rounds of interviews, I was offered the job, and started as Saxon Weald's IT Manager on the 19th of February 2001.

I remember being really impressed with our previous Chief Executive, David Standfast, and his focus on great customer service. David's vision was part of what sold the job to me.

### What drew you to social housing?

In all honesty, I didn't really know what social housing was in the beginning, so I was mainly focused on building my career. However, I quickly realised the social benefit, which was very powerful. I felt that what I was doing was worthwhile, which found a happy place in my heart.

Clean up day in Sullington, West Sussex



2006

2010



Steven at Sobell Court's 30th anniversary

2012

Sally Gunnell and Steven at our staff conference in 2012



2014



Presenting colleagues with their City & Guilds certificates

2015



The opening of our HomeFix managed store in Southwater

### How has your career developed over the last 24 years?

When I was IT Manager, I led a companywide project to streamline some of our processes. After that, in 2008, I was offered a brand-new role as Business Improvement Director. I then became Property Director in 2014, and Chief Executive in June 2018. Becoming a director was a huge learning curve, especially the responsibility and accountability that came with it.

A key part of being a director is being open to criticism, which I wasn't very good at in the beginning. However, over time I've learnt to accept it and become a listener to help me understand what the real issue is. I also learnt not to say too much, too quickly. I'd say it took me a good two years to become an effective director.

### What has been your biggest achievement at Saxon Weald?

I'd say going live with a new system when I was IT Manager, on time, and on budget! We were previously using the council's old system, so part of my role was to implement a new one. I remember going live on the 2nd of April (avoiding the 1st for obvious reasons!). My colleague and I were sitting by the phone waiting for it to start ringing with issues, but... there weren't any. It worked! And we're still (bizarrely) using that system at Saxon Weald to this day.

### What's been your most memorable moment?

Setting up HomeFix on 2nd February 2009 was a big moment. Before HomeFix we had contractors providing our repairs service. I really enjoy working in a team environment and our small project team worked well to bring the project to life. We started with 15 operatives and about nine back-office staff. To grow to the 106 members of HomeFix we have now, is just incredible.

### And finally, what will you miss the most?

That's easy, the people.





## Keeping your home gas safe

As your landlord, we're legally required to carry out annual safety checks on all gas appliances and installations we've put in your home. Our contractor, TSG, will notify you when your inspection is due. If it isn't possible for you to be there, please let us know so we can reschedule for a better time. Please help us to keep you safe by providing access to your home.

## Gas servicing with a pre-paid meter

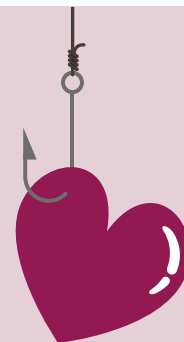
If you have a pre-paid meter, it's important it has a small amount of credit on it so we can run the checks. If you are struggling financially or have debt on your meter, please contact your Housing Manager or email our Money Matters team at [moneymatters@saxonweald.com](mailto:moneymatters@saxonweald.com) so we can support you.

**TSG**  
BUILDING SERVICES plc



## Staying safe from romance fraud

It's important to be careful when making online connections. What may seem like a harmless interaction, could potentially be a cover for something more deceitful. Unfortunately, romance fraud is a real threat, and it can happen to anyone. Here are some tips for keeping safe online:



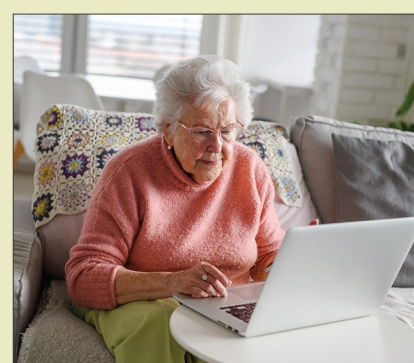
1. Be mindful that anyone can create a false identity. If someone is asking a lot of questions about you, but isn't sharing much about themselves, it's a red flag.
2. Think before sharing personal information, especially if you've only met the person online and regardless of how long you've been speaking to them.
3. Never send money to someone you've only met virtually, and don't give them access to your bank account.
4. Never share personal documents, such as your passport or driving licence.

If you or someone you know think you've been the victim of a romance scam, reach out to your bank immediately. New laws in the UK require banks to support victims of fraud. However, it's important to note that these rules do not cover transactions involving overseas banks or those found to be involved in the fraud.

For further advice and support visit: [www.actionfraud.police.uk/](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/).

## Don't miss out on the winter fuel payment...

Applications for Pension Credit must be made by **21 December 2024** to qualify for the 2024 to 2025 Winter Fuel Payment.



Pension Credit claims may be backdated up to a maximum of three months, so act now to be in with the best chance of receiving your winter payment.

To check if you are eligible and to apply, head over to: [www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim) or call 0800 99 1234.

If you are not eligible for pension credit and find yourself in financial difficulty this winter, please speak with your Scheme Manager or contact our Money Matters Team by emailing [moneymatters@saxonweald.com](mailto:moneymatters@saxonweald.com).

## Community spirit

Over the last year, colleagues from across the business have been visiting our neighbourhoods as part of our community days initiative.

Back in April, we visited Medway and Norfolk Court. After a fact-finding day at the end of 2023, we identified various issues the community were feeling. So, armed with three skips, we spent the day helping residents clear the local area, discovered several repairs needs and identified a vulnerable customer who we're now providing ongoing support to.

In July, we headed over to Steyning for a community clear up on St. Cuthman's Road. While part of the team visited customers' homes, others helped to tidy up the neighbourhood. Along with litter picking, weeding and some repairs, our staff also rescued a dog and took him to the vets, who was later reunited with his owner.

At the end of November, we carried out a fact-finding day in Stane Street in Pulborough, to find out from residents what they'd like to see from a community day. We look forward to getting out and making a difference to their neighbourhood in the Spring.

We've really enjoyed getting out and meeting lots of our residents this year. Keep an eye on social media to see what we get up to in 2025!

"I think the community day is a really good idea. It's great to see people out and about and the skip was useful. I got rid of a few things that were lying about: some remnants of carpet and some old bits and bobs."

**Linda**



"I think the skip is a brilliant idea. I had quite a bit of stuff that I needed to throw away, but with a one-year-old and being pregnant, it's not that easy. The team have really helped me today."

**Aaliyah**



## Safety Matters: Lithium-ion Batteries



Lithium-ion batteries are rechargeable power sources found in many devices, such as mobile phones, laptops, e-cigarettes, and e-scooters. They charge quickly, have a long lifespan, and pack a lot of energy. However, they are sensitive to heat and can be flammable if mishandled.

### Tips for using Lithium-ion batteries safely:

- Follow the manufacturer's safety instructions
- Only use the charger that came with your device
- Never charge batteries while you are asleep or out, and unplug devices once fully charged
- Don't charge or store lithium-ion batteries in areas that could block your escape route

### Proper disposal of batteries

Never dispose of batteries in your general rubbish or recycling. Follow your local authority's recycling guidelines or take unwanted electrical items and batteries to your local household waste recycling centre.

For more information, head over to our website: [www.saxonweald.com/news/safety-matters-lithium-ion-batteries.html](http://www.saxonweald.com/news/safety-matters-lithium-ion-batteries.html)



## Task and finish: ensuring our homes are up to scratch

The past few years have been challenging for our Empty Homes Team. This has partly been due to the amount of work needed to bring our empty properties back up to an acceptable standard.

To ensure our residents' voices are being heard, we've been working closely with our Task and Finish group. Part of their focus has been reviewing our lettable standard, as well as visiting some of our empty properties in the local area. During an outing in October, the group spent some time completing in-depth inspection forms about the properties they visited. This was a good chance to learn about the hard work that goes in to getting our properties ready to re-let.

So far this year, our Empty Homes team has worked hard to bring 237 properties back up to a lettable standard, providing more homes for those in housing need.

A big thank you once again to customers in our task and finish group for giving up their time to share their views. Your contributions continue to help us shape our services and make improvements.

Like the sound of having your say? Find out more about getting involved on our website: [www.saxonweald.com/your-voice/getting-involved](http://www.saxonweald.com/your-voice/getting-involved).



## Keeping well and warm in winter

As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisper, here are some tips to help prepare for the colder months ahead:

**Keep the heat in:** Closing curtains and blinds at dusk can help retain the heat in your home. Bleeding radiators regularly can also help to keep your home warm and more energy efficient.

**Prepare for bad weather:** Winter storms can sometimes lead to power outages and blocked roads. It may be helpful to prepare an emergency kit including a torch, spare batteries, some non-perishable food, bottled water, blankets and a first aid kit.

**Know where your stop tap is:** Knowing the location of your stop tap is important in case of an emergency. In most homes, it is located under the sink, but can also be found in the airing cupboard, under the stairs or near the front door.

**Dealing with frozen pipes:** Low temperatures can cause pipes to freeze, leak, or burst. Leaving your heating on low overnight can prevent this by keeping water circulating.

We understand that the cost of energy bills continues to be a concern for many people. If you are struggling, please contact our Money Matters team at [moneymatters@saxonweald.com](mailto:moneymatters@saxonweald.com) for further advice and support.





## Making the move to over 55 housing

*"The stairs were getting hard to manage on my own."*

*"I didn't see many people and felt lonely at times."*

*"I used to get worried about every little noise, especially at night-time."*

### Sound familiar?

Designed to make life a little easier, our retirement flats and bungalows aim to release you from the worry and work of managing a larger home. You get independence and privacy when you want it, with the added advantage of living in a welcoming community environment. Ranging from studio flats to one and two-bedroom flats and bungalows, each property has its own front door, and is fully self-contained.

But what are the benefits?

### Support - if and when you need it

Retirement housing at Saxon Weald allows you to live independently with the reassurance that assistance is there should you need it. Along with the support of a friendly Scheme Manager, many residents feel a real sense of community around them.



*"I have a neighbour on one side who's 89 who I pop and see daily, and a neighbour on the other side who's 95. He knows to open the door by 8 o'clock or he'll get a call from me!"*

### Companionship

If you enjoy an active lifestyle, or are looking for friendship, there are often plenty of opportunities to socialise with other residents. However, you choose the lifestyle you want, and this can be as private or as active as you wish.



*"Everyone makes you feel welcome. The ladies are so helpful and there is always someone around to help if I have a problem. There's a real community around me and I get to socialise and see people."*

### Security

All our apartment blocks are fitted with electronic door-entry systems (bungalows will have their own lockable front door). This enables residents to let visitors in, without leaving their home, providing that extra layer of security.

*"When I lived on my own, I used to get worried about every little noise, especially at night-time. Now I feel safe and secure even when I'm on my own."*

## Thinking of downsizing or need a bit of help with day-to-day living?

For a no-obligation chat about your options, please get in touch at 01403 226000 or email [home.move@saxonweald.com](mailto:home.move@saxonweald.com).

You can also find out more about our retirement and extra care living developments on our website: [www.saxonweald.com/our-over-55s-developments](http://www.saxonweald.com/our-over-55s-developments).

Unlike Santa, you don't want to get into the red this Christmas! So we've put together some top money-saving tips and advice to help you celebrate the festive season with friends, family or the kids on a budget.



## Saving pennies (or pounds) on presents



If money is tight, it's important not to overstretch yourself by spending more than you can afford on gifts, even for the little ones.

**Have a clear-out:** Try selling some of your own items that you no longer use or need and use any money you save towards Christmas. Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree, Vinted and eBay are all great options for selling second hand goods. They are also a great place to look for discount presents.

**Set a budget:** Be honest and tell those that matter that you need to be careful with what you are spending. It's quite likely that you aren't the only one. Agree on price limits for gifts or suggest a secret Santa, where everyone only buys one present up to a certain value for one person in your group.

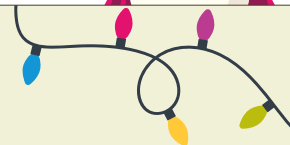
**Create something meaningful:** If you still want to give someone something meaningful on a budget, why not make or buy a special tree decoration and suggest they do the same for you? Then every year you'll share a memory when you put the tree up.

**Make your own:** Home-made gifts can be cheaper and more special than anything shop-bought. If you can sew, you could personalise a cushion or item of clothing. Or why not make some sweets or jams?

**Be practical:** Of course, every child loves a bulging stocking, so top up the toys with practical presents like new socks, a toothbrush and bubble bath. They are all things you'd need to buy anyway, but your child gets the pleasure of unwrapping it.



## Make memories for free!



Getting out and about with loved ones doesn't have to take you far or cost money. Get into the festive spirit with an evening stroll around your local area admiring the lights and decorations. Or take a wintry walk in the park or countryside. Kids can enjoy collecting branches, berries and pinecones along the way, and they can use them to make some Christmas decorations later. For ideas on what to make, head to: [www.bakerross.co.uk/craft-ideas/category/kids/themes/pine-cone/](http://www.bakerross.co.uk/craft-ideas/category/kids/themes/pine-cone/).

For an extra treat, end your walk with a warming hot chocolate. You could make it even more indulgent by topping with some squirty cream, crushed Maltesers or biscuits and some mini marshmallows. Don't forget the spoons!



## Christmas opening hours

We will be closed for Christmas from 1pm on Tuesday 24 December, until 8.30 am on Thursday 2 January.

If you need emergency help during this time, please call 01403 226000 and you will be redirected to our out-of-hours service.

Remember, you can access your account anytime at [MySaxonWeald.com](http://MySaxonWeald.com). Please be aware that any payments made or repairs booked during our Christmas shutdown will not be processed until the new year.

We would like to wish all our customers a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and safe new year.



## WHAT'S ON OVER THE FESTIVE PERIOD

### Barns Green Christmas Tree Festival and Santa's Grotto

14 - 15 December 2024

Sumners Ponds, The Cafe by the Lake, Chapel Road, Barns Green, RH13 0PR

Tickets for the Christmas tree festival are £5 per person with the tickets to visit Santa at £6 per child on top. Tickets must be bought through Eventbrite.

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/barns-green-christmas-tree-festival-2024-tickets-1024685861997](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/barns-green-christmas-tree-festival-2024-tickets-1024685861997)



### Christmas at Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

9 Causeway, Horsham, RH12 1HE

View Christmas decorations from Tuesday 19 November and take part in the Christmas-themed family trail. There's also a special Museum Late on Friday 20 December. For up-to date information go to: [www.horsham.gov.uk/christmas](http://www.horsham.gov.uk/christmas).

### Christmas magic

14 - 15 December 2024

St. John's Church, Church Road, Broadbridge Heath, RH12 3LD  
Kinderoo's baby and toddler group are holding a Christmas party exclusively for little ones. Children meet Santa in his grotto, enjoy party food and a show from Tony the magician.

Tickets for children cost £7 and need to be booked in advance. Adults go free. Go to: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/kinderoos-christmas-party-tickets-1049716489277](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/kinderoos-christmas-party-tickets-1049716489277).

### Festive markets

With Christmas markets in Horsham, Billingshurst, Henfield, Pulborough, Steyning and Storrington, there is always something new to discover.

Southampton city centre won an award last year for their market. This year will have more than 30 festive stalls, entertainment and a funfair, as well as a giant Ferris wheel offering views over the city. There is also a Santa's grotto on Sundays throughout December between 12 noon and 2pm.

The market is open daily from 15 November 2024 to 5 January 2025 at Above Bar Street and Guildhall Square.

[www.visitsoutheastengland.com/events/southampton-christmas-market-p1229851](http://www.visitsoutheastengland.com/events/southampton-christmas-market-p1229851)



## Christmas support



Although Christmas is a happy and exciting time for many, for others, it can be a difficult period. For those in need of support, there are services available during this time.

We've recently updated our Helping Hand Guide, which is full of useful tips and tricks to make your money go further. You can find it on our website: [www.saxonweald.com/money-matters/helping-hand-guide](http://www.saxonweald.com/money-matters/helping-hand-guide).

**The Samaritans** – a safe place to talk:

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

T: 116 123

**Crisis** – if you're homeless or at risk of becoming homeless:

[www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)

T: 0300 636 1967

**The Trussell Trust** – local foodbanks:

[www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org)

T: 0808 208 2138

**Shelter** – housing advice services:

<https://england.shelter.org.uk>

T: 0808 800 4444

**Domestic abuse support services:** [www.saxonweald.com/da-support-services](http://www.saxonweald.com/da-support-services)

<https://refuge.org.uk/>

T: 0808 2000 247



## Sharing your information

Saxon Weald is required by law to protect the public funds we manage. As a housing provider, we also have a responsibility to help detect and prevent instances of fraud.

The Cabinet Office requires us to take part in its National Fraud Initiative. To do this, we must provide them with tenancy information, which is compared with data from other public bodies, such as the Department for Work & Pensions. The initiative helps to ensure that benefits are only being paid to those who are entitled. Information is collected every two years and we have recently submitted our data for the latest exercise.

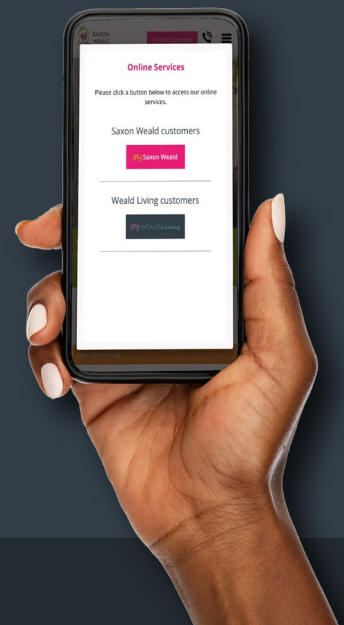
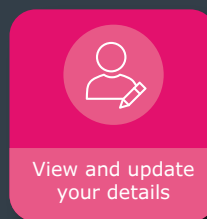
Sometimes, wrong payments are made because of a genuine error, and in previous years, the initiative has helped to identify tenants receiving too little housing benefit. The initiative therefore helps to promote the best use of public funds.

To find out more, visit: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-fraud-initiative](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-fraud-initiative).



## 😊 Online, anytime, anywhere

Our easy-to-use, online services put you in charge of your home, anytime, anywhere. They provide secure access to your information and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week from a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile.



Sign up today at [www.saxonweald.com/online-services](http://www.saxonweald.com/online-services).



Saxon Weald House, 38-42 Worthing Road, Horsham, RH12 1DT |

Tel: 01403 226000 | Email: [info@saxonweald.com](mailto:info@saxonweald.com) | [www.saxonweald.com](http://www.saxonweald.com)

Saxon Weald is a charitable Community Benefit Society (reg no. 7971) Registered with the Regulator of Social Housing L4299 • VAT reg 742 3736 34

