

Tenant Newsletter



Housing People
March 2023

Easter opening hours

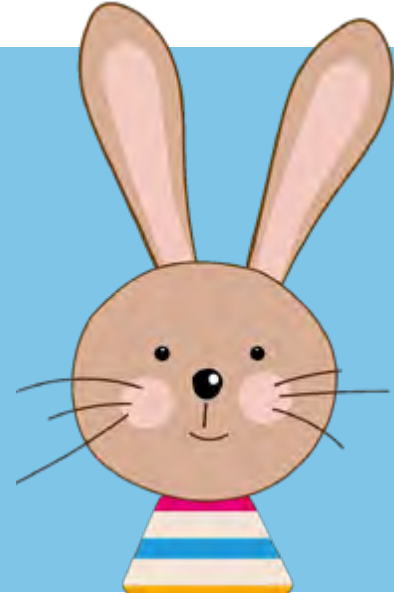
Head Office and Repairs will be closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday (7th and 10th April)

If you have an emergency repair in this time call **01392 273462** option 1.

An emergency call out is something which has the potential to:

- cause danger to someone's health and safety or
- cause immediate serious damage and destruction to a property, home or building.

See www.cornerstonehousing.net/tenant-handbook for more information on what is classed as an emergency and what is classed as routine.



EASTER COLOURING COMPETITION 2023

Easter is nearly here and we are launching our 2023 Easter colouring competition... but this year we have a twist!

Every entry received from a Cornerstone tenant will receive an Easter egg!

Which we will aim to deliver before Easter, ready for Easter Sunday chocolate fest!

How to enter

Submit an Easter picture – this can be drawn from scratch or you can colour in one of our colouring sheets from our website.

Not got a printer at home? Don't worry you have two other options

1. Email mail@cornerstonehousing.net with your name and address and how many colouring sheets you would like and we will post some to you the next day (we will even include a return envelope!)
2. Colour it digitally! If you have a computer, tablet or phone there are many apps available for you to draw or colour an Easter picture.

Closing date 31st March 2023

Full terms and conditions and how to submit your entry can be found on our website:

www.cornerstonehousing.net/easter-colouring-competition-2023



HELLO AND WELCOME FROM JANET



Welcome to March, spring is fast approaching and many of you are getting ready for your gardens. Have you placed your entry into the Gardening Competition yet?

The Panel had their monthly meeting at the Repairs Depot in Wykes Road, this gave staff and tenants the opportunity to learn more about what the Performance Panel can do for the Tenants and what is expected from Cornerstone.

Youth Panel - If anyone who is living as a tenant or tenants family in a Cornerstone property, age between 16 and 25 years old, and would like to join, email Cornerstone for more details. You will be able to add this to your CV for future College entry or a job.

The Panel will be reviewing various policies in the coming months including empty properties, mould and damp, communications and complaints. Is there anything you would like to see the panel review? Would you like to come and join the meeting to take part in a review? Email mail@cornerstonehousing.net for more information.

Community Fun Days: Are you planning a Coronation Day tea street party or even a small garden party? Please let us know, we would love to hear about it and maybe photos too.

Would you like to join the Tenants Performance Panel? We need more tenants to represent their area, no age barrier, we need someone who is prepared to be an attendee and to speak on behalf of tenants. We are a happy group, we work hard, but it is so rewarding. We work very closely with the Board of Directors, who also have a presence on our panel, and our aims are to listen to, and act upon what the tenants would like to see Cornerstone do. You can even attend via Teams (Zoom) if you cannot attend in person. Our next meeting is happening in the community - Café on the Heale in Exwick on Wednesday 5th April at 4.15 pm.

Janet Gale
Chair, Tenants Performance Panel.

TENANT ANNUAL REPORT



Our 2022 tenant annual report is now
live visit

www.cornerstonetenantreport.net
for more information on

- Governance
- Where we spend money
- Tenant involvement
- Complaints and Compliments
- Anti Social behaviour
- Repairs and maintenance
and much more!

VOTING CHANGES

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023 it will also apply to UK General elections.

If you don't have accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate. Visit www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate to apply

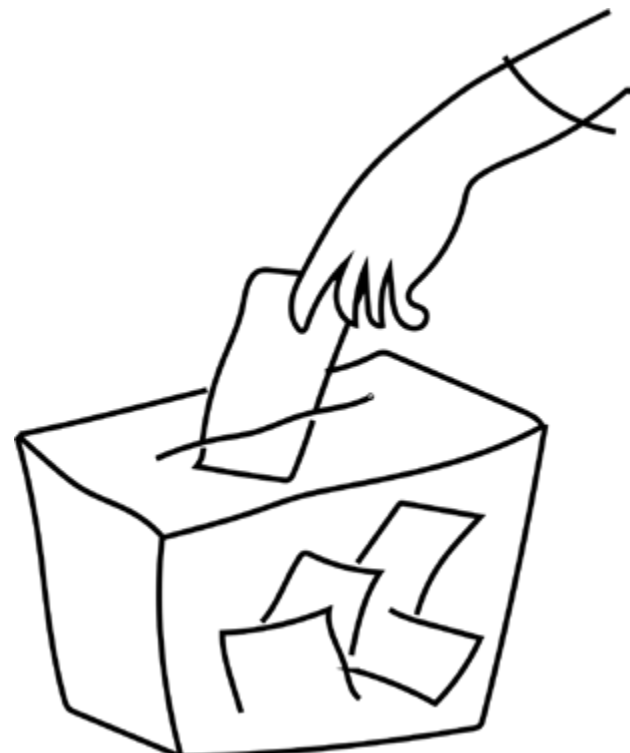
If you have yet registered to vote you have till Monday 17 April to register for the 4 May 2023 elections.

Visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk to register

If you can't get to a polling station to vote you can vote by post

If you know that you won't be able to get to the polling station on polling day, you can vote by post.

You can apply for postal vote because you're away on holiday or because your work schedule means you can't get to polling station. You can also choose to vote by post simply because it would be more convenient for you. Visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk to register for a postal vote.



EASTER HOLIDAY IDEAS!

HALDON FOREST ZOG TRAIL

Haldon Forest have a new trail featuring Zog with a new augmented reality app.

Download the new 'Zog: A Forest Adventure' app before you visit, point the app at special markers along the trail and access all sorts of exciting challenges as you go.

Mostly level surfaced trail. Suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.



THE DONKEY SANCTUARY

Easter Wildlife hunt - £5 with an Easter prize!

A new play area, daily talks, scenic walks, engaging exhibits, award-winning gardens and hundreds of adorable donkeys to meet. Friendly dogs on leads are welcome too!



GREENDALE EASTER EGG HUNT

Especially for children, the Easter Egg Hunt is completely free - just pop into the Farm Shop to find the first clue, then follow all the other clues around the Farm Trail until the final clue leads to a sweet reward! The Easter Egg Hunt will be available from 9am until 5pm from April 1st to April 10th.



ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS

There are plenty of playgrounds in the surrounding areas - have you visited them all?

- Decoy Country Park, Newton Abbot, TQ12 1EB
- Courtenay Park, off Devon Road, Salcombe TQ8 8DG
- The Den on Teignmouth sea front, South Devon TQ14 8BQ
- GeoPlay Park on Paignton sea front, South Devon TQ4 6AG
- Queens Drive Space in Exmouth, East Devon EX8 2AY
- Lakeside Park, Mount Wear Square, Exeter EX2 7BP



PERFORMANCE PANEL CUSTOMER VOICE REVIEW

It is important that all customers feel they have a voice and can give feedback on the services that they receive. It is equally important that Cornerstone takes customer views into account. The panel were asked to review whether customers from all sections of our communities are able to be heard and that their views are being taken into account in decision making.

The review took place between March 2022 and March 2023.

A small selection of findings from the Performance Panel's

Overall the panel feels that Cornerstone does listen and take into account the views of residents but there are areas that can be improved upon. The panel has made the following findings

- Feedback has suggested that customers may not know how to complain and escalate issues, and also whether staff are raising complaints or escalating them at the appropriate time.
- Cornerstone is actively trying to engage more with residents through community events and partnerships, for example with the community builders.
- The move from whole house improvements to the component scheme is an example of where Cornerstone has listened to customers about their homes and more customers are now getting some form of improvement to their home.

Recommendations going forward

- Follow up with customers that have provided feedback in surveys to see if Cornerstone has acted, the panel could help with verifying this and feeding back
- Provide more information to the panel on how Cornerstone resolves issues in neighbourhoods, through case studies and time with housing officers, this could also include a review on this specific area in 2023/24
- Provide more communication to customers regarding the complaints process, what is and isn't a complaint and provide regular training to staff

To read the full Customer Voice review visit our website
www.cornerstonehousing.net/customer-voice-review/

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

All tenants will have received a letter regarding rent and service charge increases coming into effect on 1st April.

Normally, your rent would go up by the rate of inflation in September, plus 1%. This would have meant a rent increase of 11.1%. To protect customers from cost of living pressures, your rent is instead going up by 7% this year. If you pay service charges, these have been reviewed to reflect our costs in providing the services to you.

Why is your rent going up?

The costs of building work have gone up by 10% to 15% in the past year, which means that delivering repairs and installing new boilers, windows, kitchens and bathrooms and so on are all much more expensive than they were a year ago. The cost of our energy bills as a business are also four times higher than they were. Many of these costs are predicted to continue to rise steeply.

The government has capped housing association rent increases at 7% to protect customers from cost of living pressures. If the government hadn't capped rents, our increase would still have been below inflation. This is because we recognise the cost pressures everyone is facing.

In our annual tenant survey in 2022, many customers said the number one priority was completing major improvements to homes. If we had set rents below 7%, we would have had to make cuts to services and investment because the costs to run Cornerstone are rising by much more than that.

What about service charges?

You will generally only pay service charges if you live in a flat or home with communal areas or services. We usually review these every 2 years, we didn't increase them last year when they were due (unless you pay a personal heating or hot water charge) so that we could complete a more detailed review. This has now taken place and service charges are changing to reflect the current costs in providing the services to you, however they will not increase by more than 7%.

What about parking and garage charges?

If you rent a parking space or garage from us these charges will not be going up in April 2023.

What to do if you are worried or struggling to pay

Most importantly please don't struggle in silence, we know these are difficult times for some of you and you may need some help so do get in touch with us. There are many ways that we may be able to help. Please do get in touch with us if you need some support on **01392 273462** or **mail@cornerstonehousing.net**.

UPDATING YOUR UNIVERSAL CREDIT

On the 1st April you will need to update DWP via your universal credit account of your new rent amount going forward (**Do not do this before the 1st April!**)

- Log onto your claim, go to your "To Do" and follow the online prompts.
If you do not have a "To Do" then go to 'change of circumstances', then go to 'where you live and what it costs' and update your new rent and service charges. If you do not do this, you will not receive the correct amount of housing costs.

Housing Benefit - if this is paid to you - Tell the Council about your new rent immediately as we do not hold any housing benefit details for you.

Housing Benefit - paid to Cornerstone - There is no need to do anything we have informed your council of the changes to your rent.

Standing Order - (regular bank transfer) if you pay by standing order through your bank you will need to tell your bank of the changes to ensure you pay the correct amount of rent. You can do this in your bank or via your banking app.

Direct Debit - if you pay by direct debit you do not need to do anything, we will update your direct debit amount.

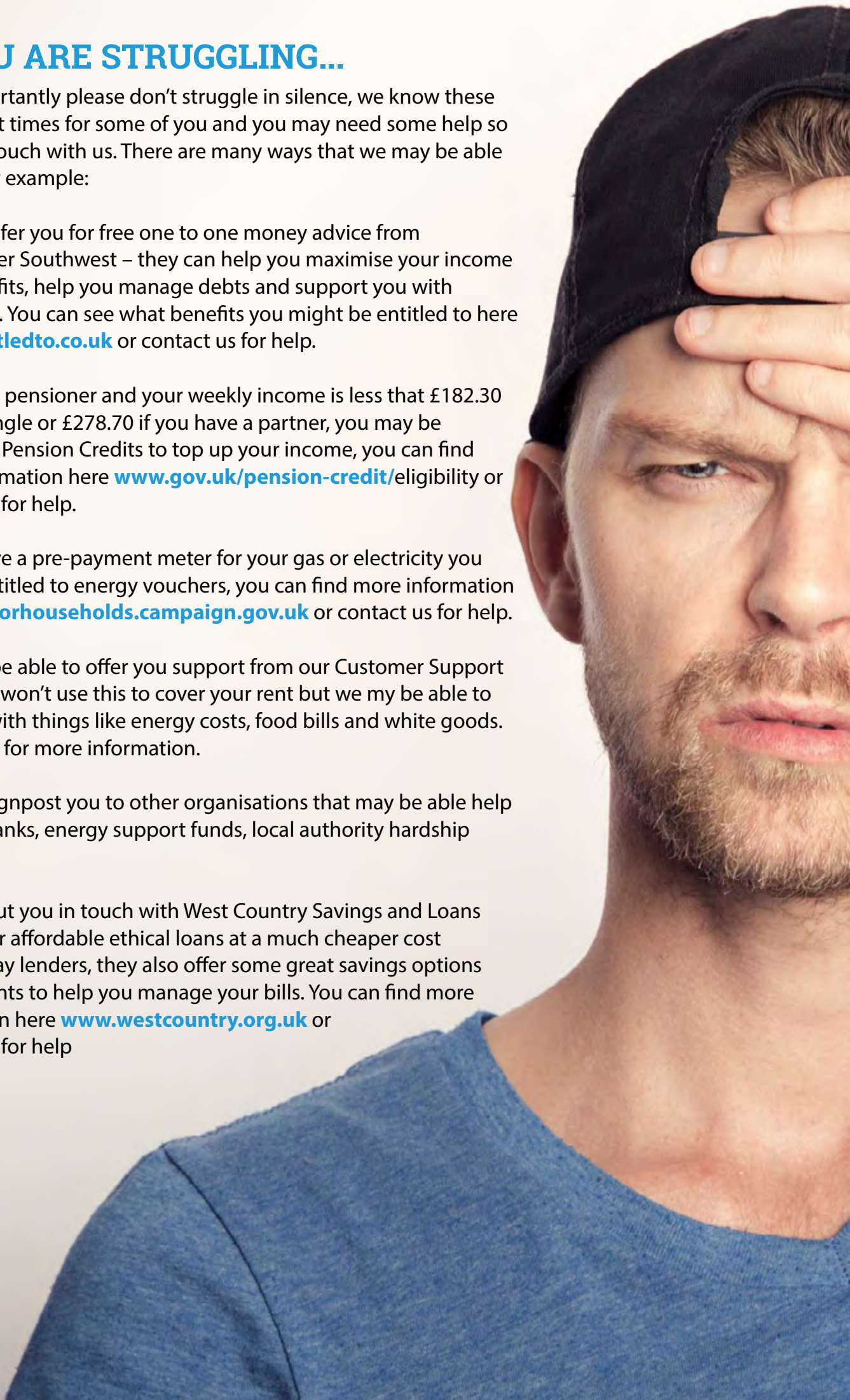
If you would like to pay by direct debit in future, please contact us on **01392 273462** to set one up over the phone or text DD to **07491 163432**.



IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING...

Most importantly please don't struggle in silence, we know these are difficult times for some of you and you may need some help so do get in touch with us. There are many ways that we may be able to help, for example:

- We can refer you for free one to one money advice from Homemaker Southwest – they can help you maximise your income from benefits, help you manage debts and support you with budgeting. You can see what benefits you might be entitled to here www.entitledto.co.uk or contact us for help.
- If you're a pensioner and your weekly income is less than £182.30 if you're single or £278.70 if you have a partner, you may be entitled to Pension Credits to top up your income, you can find more information here www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility or contact us for help.
- If you have a pre-payment meter for your gas or electricity you may be entitled to energy vouchers, you can find more information here helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk or contact us for help.
- We may be able to offer you support from our Customer Support Fund – we won't use this to cover your rent but we may be able to help you with things like energy costs, food bills and white goods. Contact us for more information.
- We can signpost you to other organisations that may be able to help like foodbanks, energy support funds, local authority hardship funds.
- We can put you in touch with West Country Savings and Loans – they offer affordable ethical loans at a much cheaper cost than payday lenders, they also offer some great savings options and accounts to help you manage your bills. You can find more information here www.westcountry.org.uk or contact us for help.



A watercolor illustration of various chocolate-making tools and ingredients. At the top, there's a chocolate mold, a chocolate bar, and a chocolate pot. Below, there are chocolate beans, a chocolate bar, a chocolate spoon, and a chocolate bar. The background is light blue with scattered chocolate-related items.

Cornerstone Housing Performance Panel meeting

The Performance Panel are taking their monthly meetings into the Cornerstone areas in the hope that Tenants will come along to see what we do on your behalf.

Open to all Cornerstone Housing Tenants

Wednesday April 5th, 4.15pm

Cafe on the Heale, Winchester Avenue, Exwick.

ARE YOU GOING AWAY THIS YEAR?

If you are going away for more than 28 days you need to inform us in advanced that you are going away. This is so we know the property is unoccupied and if any emergencies arise we are aware you are not in the building. We will also be able to make sure no routine maintenance (Gas servicing) do not need to be completed before you leave.

If possible you should also provide us with the contact details of a key holder to the property while you are away.

Other benefits

Short absences for holidays abroad do not affect most benefits. However, your entitlement to certain benefits can change if: If you are going abroad for 4 weeks or more this includes Northern Ireland, but you must tell the office that pays your benefit.

This covers nearly all benefits which you receive including Universal Credit. So do not get caught out when on holiday.

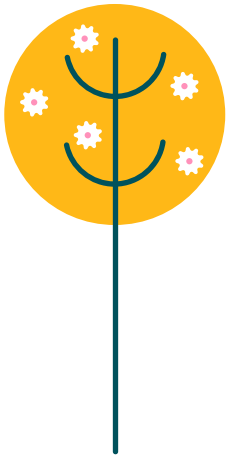


SMOKING

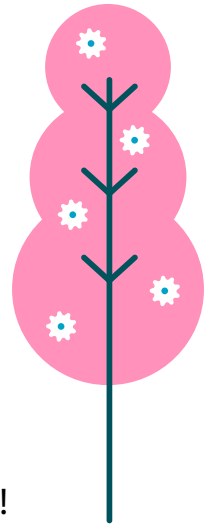
We would like to remind our tenants to not to smoke whilst our operatives are in the property. Please also make sure the area where they need to work is cleared of personal belongings and any rubbish has been removed.

If you would like help to stop smoking visit onesmallstep.org.uk who can offer a 12 week behavioural support and Nicotine replacement therapy.

Don't forget to test your smoke detectors today!



Cornerstone Gardening Competition 2023



Calling all green fingered tenants!
We are launching a gardening competition for 2023.

Whether you have a full lawn with flowerbeds or a selection of hanging basket and pots at your property - everyone can enter!

We are launching this competition as we have noticed a lot of our tenants take so much care and attention to their outside spaces and we would like to reward them on the positive impact this has on the people around them.

Best overall garden - £100

Most creative use of space! - £25

Best young gardener - £25

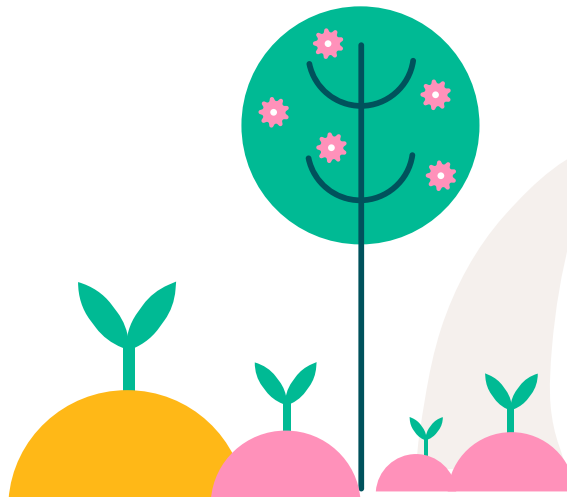
Tallest sunflower - £25



We can post sunflower seeds to anyone wishing to take part, contact mail@cornerstonehousing.net before the end of March.

To enter, please email 3 photos of your garden to mail@cornerstonehousing.net, include your name, address and contact details, or enter via our website www.cornerstonehousing.net/2023-gardening-competition/

Closing date of entries is 31st July. Our performance panel will judge all the entries the first week of August.



01392 273462

Opening hours: 9.00am - 5.00pm
Monday to Friday

Head Office

Cornerstone House
Western Way
Exeter
EX1 1AL

Customer Services

mail@cornerstonehousing.net

Repairs

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