

www.soha.co.uk



A GUIDE TO

Independent and Retirement Living

HOUSING AND SERVICES

Contents

Introduction to Independent and Retirement Living

Soha Housing offers a range of affordable accommodation for people reaching retirement age. With homes across South Oxfordshire and surrounding areas, there is plenty of choice to rent or buy in both town and village locations.

We have 3 types of accommodation:

Flats and Bungalows

Our traditional one or two bedroom flats are available for anyone seeking complete independence. Modern flats for older people also have energy-efficient heating, good space sizes and are easy to manage.

Our bungalows can usually be found in more rural areas and often have a garden or parking.

Independent Living schemes

We have upgraded many of our traditional sheltered schemes to provide quality accommodation to people who want to live with others of a similar age, often in a building with a communal entrance, lounge and garden.

These schemes in towns and villages are ideal if you prefer getting to know your neighbours a little and remaining independent. Whilst our teams do visit regularly there are no on-site staff.

Extra Care Housing

Extra Care Housing is ideal for older people who might have support needs as it is wheelchair accessible accommodation with an on-site support service. Residents needing ongoing support must first be assessed by the local authority for care needs.

However, these are not residential care homes and they host many activities and promote healthy living. Most have a restaurant, hairdresser, and an IT room. Each Extra Care Housing scheme has an Independent Living Adviser based on the premises.

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Please contact us if you would like a large print version of this publication.

“ I have lived in this village for many years, like this neighbourhood and plan to stay here. ”

Choosing Your Home

You can view details of our Soha homes on **www.homechoice.org.uk**. To apply for housing with Soha you need to register with your local Council. This will include completing a form online and a family member or your local authority can help you with this. Soha can also help you with your application so please call Customer Services on **01235 515 900** or **0800 014 15 45** (Freephone). Alternatively, you're welcome to drop in to Reception at our Didcot offices.

Who can apply?

Anyone over the age of 55 can apply for housing with us. We will also consider younger residents living with disabilities if the property would be more suitable for them than an adapted home. Our homes are self-contained, comfortable retirement apartments or bungalows as well as individual flats or Independent Living schemes. This offers you the best of both worlds - the privacy of your own home, or an active social life when it suits you. The choice is yours.

We try to accommodate couples as well as single people and our Independent Living blocks, often with a communal lounge and garden, are perfect for wider family visits.

Shared ownership

Our shared ownership apartments are offered on a part-rent, part-buy basis to make them more affordable. Full details of our shared ownership homes are published on our website **www.soha.co.uk**.

Further information

Our staff can help advise you on which type of accommodation would suit you best. Call Soha on **01235 515 900** or **0800 014 15 45** (Freephone). You can also find more information at **www.soha.co.uk**.



Independent Living Schemes



We have over 20 Independent Living schemes offering you security and the companionship of living with other people attracted by independent or retirement living. The schemes, each with a communal entrance, have between twelve and thirty flats and a visiting Independent Living Adviser who holds regular scheme meetings for residents.

We have replaced some of our older Independent Living housing schemes with modern flats designed and built specifically for older people. Each flat, with its own front door, includes good living space and a cost-effective heating system. Some flats have access to communal gardens maintained by Soha. Parking is available at most schemes.

Our Independent Living Service at-a-glance

We will:

- Support you to live independently.
- Advise you about housing choices on offer: Individual flats, Housing Schemes or Extra Care Housing.
- Help you access support services such as Occupational Therapists and social workers, or our own Tenancy Support Service.
- In partnership with the Seniors' Group, deliver social and wellbeing events that you can join.
- Visit you to review your independent living each year once you reach 70 years old.

When you move in

The Independent Living Adviser is there to help you view a property, settle in and show you how to pay rent, report repairs and generally keep in touch with us. Soha doesn't provide care but we can help you get in touch with organisations who visit people at home. We have a programme of health and wellbeing activities, including chair-based exercises.

Extra Care Housing

As you get older you might want to stay in your own home for as long as you can but need help with mobility or day-to-day tasks.

Extra Care Housing is purpose-built, wheelchair accessible and offers your own front door. Properties are accessed with key fobs and have CCTV installed. A care and support provider team is on site 24 hours a day. A care assessment is needed for this service on an ongoing basis.

Extra Care Housing has a great community spirit with activities including cooking, singing and gardening. Available to individuals and couples, you can keep your independence while living in a safe, secure and supportive environment.

Some of the flats can be purchased on a part-buy, part-rent basis and the remaining flats are rented.

Extra Care Housing is ideal if you're over 55 and need a little more support. It's not residential care – the emphasis is on independence and helping you to remain in your own home for as long as possible.

For couples only one resident needs to have a care need. If your husband / wife / partner does not need care you can still live together in Extra Care Housing.

The benefits of Extra Care Housing

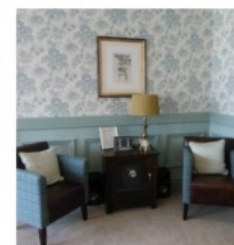
- Helps maintain an independent lifestyle, but reduces anxieties and worries.
- 24-hour care on site.
- Independence, but with the option to socialise with other residents.
- Close to shops and other services.
- Events and activities to help keep your mind and body healthy.

Property features

- Spacious one or two bedroom apartments
- Fitted kitchens
- Level access wet rooms
- Lift access to all floors
- Landscaped communal gardens
- Comfortable communal lounge
- Hairdressing salon on site
- Laundry facilities
- 24 hour emergency alarm system

Locations of our Extra Care schemes

- Goring-on-Thames – Towse Court
- Thame – Windmill Place
- Kingston Bagpuize – Petypher House



How to apply

If you are interested in finding out more please call us on **01235 515 900** or **0800 014 15 45** (Freephone). For more information on Extra Care Housing please visit www.soha.co.uk/extra-care.

Support Services



Soha's Independent Living Advisers

Independent Living Advisers (ILAs) hold scheme meetings for tenants at all our Independent Living schemes. These are also open to tenants in the neighbouring bungalows. Our ILAs check on the building, grounds maintenance and the cleaning of communal areas and can help tenants organise social events and visiting speakers. The scheme meetings are a great opportunity to chat with other residents and share experiences.

Support visits

Anyone needing care and support will be referred to a local service designed to help older people remain at home with some additional help, such as an OKEachDay telephone line. They can also refer you to Social Services for a care package. Soha will happily refer tenants to this service which might even be free for tenants on a lower income or for a small fee for those with higher income.



Tenancy Support Service

Soha's Tenancy Support Service helps tenants who are finding it difficult to maintain their tenancy. It is provided and funded by Soha as a means of helping residents with support needs to keep their home. Our Tenancy Support Officers, Toby Laver and Holly Caulkett (pictured left) will help you remain independent. They can check your benefit entitlement, refer you to support agencies such as AgeUK or Social Services and put you in touch with local help such as the Good Neighbours Scheme.



Digital Inclusion and Digital Champions

If you need a little help to use a computer or smartphone or to get online our digital inclusion sessions can help you. Our Digital Champions, who are all Soha residents, help run free sessions in the community where they teach you how to set up an email account, talk to your family on Skype, complete application forms, order your shopping online and use price comparison websites to help you save money.

Aids and Adaptations

There are many different types of equipment available, whether you have difficulty getting in and out of your property, using the stairs, answering the door, or carrying out everyday tasks such as cooking, washing, dressing or using the bathroom. Although adaptations to your home can be costly, you might be eligible for financial assistance from the local authority. If major adaptations are needed we may offer you alternative accommodation that might suit you better.

Disability equipment and small adaptations are generally provided free of charge if you've been assessed as needing them and you are eligible. Examples of adaptations and equipment include grab rails, ramps, and kettle tippers. Larger adaptations may be funded through a Disabled Facilities Grant. Contact Soha for more information.

OKEachDay

OKEachDay is a telephone service that supports independent living. It can be activated through a large button telephone which works as a normal phone. You simply press a button each day to let us know that you're alright. If you don't press the OKEachDay button, Soha is contacted so we can check how you are. If you would like this service just contact the Independent Living team at Soha.

“The more ways of contacting the outside world I have, the better. I just press a button each day to let them know that I'm alright. If I don't – or I can't – OKEachDay contacts me to check.”



Moving Home

Your options

As people grow older and their children leave home, it can be difficult to manage larger homes and gardens and pay the fuel bills. Many people find smaller homes easier to manage and reduce the risk of falls as steps or stairs become trickier to navigate.

Downsizing - moving to a smaller home

Downsizing to a smaller property can often help lower heating bills and give you a more manageable home, perhaps nearer to your family. Any Soha tenant who currently lives in a family sized home and wishes to move to smaller older persons' housing such as a flat, bungalow, Independent Living scheme or Extra Care scheme can apply for the Transfer Incentive Scheme. We might be able to help with the costs of moving or offer practical help with moving, such as arranging removal companies and carpet fitting.

More information is available in our leaflet *Is your home too big for you? Soha's transfer incentive scheme*.

“ I am delighted I moved home after struggling with stairs and steps. My new flat is easier to heat and I don't have to worry about the garden. ”

Events and activities

Residents in some schemes organise their own events and activities including day trips, theatre visits, gardening clubs and BBQs. The skills and experiences of our residents have previously been celebrated through a series of 'Memories in Mind' workshops, reminiscing about life in years gone by and sharing good memories. We also have an annual Christmas party. We work alongside many other community-based organisations such as AgeUK to help people get all the help and support they need and remain active members of their community.

Resident Involvement and Membership

We put resident involvement at the heart of everything we do and work hand in hand with residents in designing, delivering and developing homes and services.

Involving you is all about meeting new people, learning new things and working with us to improve our services and your communities. It doesn't mean lots of meetings, paperwork or people talking at you. Whether you've got a few minutes to spare every few months or you can give more of your time, there are lots of ways you can get involved. Just let us know.

You can also become a Soha member which means you can become more fully involved in decisions affecting the future of Soha Housing.

Seniors' Group

Many of our residents like to offer their views on how Soha plans and runs its housing and services. With our sociable Seniors' Group, tenants can share their views and help redesign services. Residents are also involved in the Tenant Auditors group, the Scrutiny Group, mystery shopping and even joining our Board.

Further information

Find out more about what's going on by checking out our events calendar at www.soha.co.uk/events or contact our Resident Involvement Team on **0800 014 15 435** (Freephone) or email ri@soha.co.uk.



Advice, Support and Information Services

Advice and Support

AgeUK	AgeUK Oxfordshire provides essential services for older people throughout the county. Whether you are an older person or care for an older person as a friend or relative, AgeUK has a range of services that can offer practical help and support including will and funeral planning and advice on Power of Attorney. (See under Legal opposite)	www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire 0345 450 1276
Citizens' Advice	If you need advice on pension credits, benefit entitlements or Power of Attorney, the Citizens' Advice Bureau is a good place to start. If they cannot answer every aspect of your query, they will signpost you to other organisations that can help.	www.adviceguide.org.uk 03444 111 444
Cruse Bereavement Centre	Free care and bereavement counselling when someone close to you dies.	www.cruse.org.uk 0808 808 1677
The Silver Line	The Silver Line is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.	www.thesilverline.org.uk 0800 4 70 80 90

Health and Wellbeing

Adult Health and Social Care	Information and advice on care assessment and assistance for older people and carers in Oxfordshire.	www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/social-and-health-care
Macmillan	If you've been diagnosed with cancer, or a loved one has, Macmillan Cancer Support can provide practical, medical and financial support.	www.macmillan.org.uk 0808 808 00 00
Message in a Bottle	The Message in a Bottle scheme is a simple idea for people living on their own. You can use any bottle and a piece of paper, or ask for one at your health centre or chemist, and a form to fill in with your basic personal and medical details. Then just leave your bottle in the fridge so it can be found in an emergency.	www.365alive.co.uk/cms/content/have-you-got-message-bottle To get hold of a free green bottle please call 01865 323 765
MIND	MIND aims to make sure anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn for advice and support. It can help you make choices about treatment, understand your rights or access support. It also organises lots of group activities such as reading, drama or just spending time with other people to talk.	www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk 01865 247 788
National Dementia Helpline	Information, advice and signposting to support you or those you care for.	www.alzheimers.org.uk 0300 222 11 22

Advice, Support and Information Services

Legal

Power of Attorney

A Power of Attorney is a legal document that allows someone to make decisions for you, or act on your behalf, if you're no longer able or no longer wish to make your own Decisions.

More information:

www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice
(type *Power of Attorney* in the search box) or
call the Office of the Public Guardian on
0300 456 0300.

Social

U3A

U3A is a local charity organisation for retired and semi-retired people to come together and learn together. Members share their skills and life experiences: the learners teach and the teachers learn, and there is no distinction between them. Activities include walking, languages, crafts, computing, board and card games, history and much more.

www.u3a.org.uk
020 8466 6139

Utilities and Insurance

Energy Saving Trust

EST offers advice on how to reduce bills, make your home more energy-efficient and has information on grants and schemes to help with heating costs.

www.est.org.uk
020 7222 0101

Insurance and energy comparison and switching

Online website services help you to compare prices on a range of products and services. They can help you save money on gas and electricity, heating, phones, insurance and personal finance products.

Some of the more well-known sites include:

www.gocompare.com
www.moneysupermarket.com
www.uswitch.com



This publication is an initiative led by our tenant based Seniors' Group (pictured) and aims to provide more information about the choices available to people looking for independent or retirement living.



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