

## Coronavirus (COVID -19) Frequently Asked Questions.

### Customer Service

#### **Are receptions still open?**

*Our receptions are currently closed as we try to reduce the spread of this virus. Just contact us on 01284 767224 if you need to get in touch.*

#### **Are your phone lines open?**

*Yes. However, we are having to manage an increase in calls, so it is possible you may experience a longer wait than usual, please be patient and we will answer as possible can. You can also pay your rent online [here](#).*

#### **Can I still contact you to discuss my tenancy or pay my rent?**

*Yes, our call centre and housing teams are set up to work from home and can assist you on these enquiries in the normal way. Just contact us on 01284 767224.*

#### **Is information available for residents who don't have access to the internet?**

*Yes, we've written to residents without mobile or internet.*

#### **How are you making sure vulnerable residents are ok?**

*We are aware some residents may need some extra help right now. We are making welfare calls to those we understand may be vulnerable to see if there is anything we can do to help with supplies, signposting or simply someone to speak to. We will be sure to update you if anything has changed also. If you need something before we call, please call us.*

### Safety

#### **Do I need to tell you if I have symptoms of COVID-19 and are self-isolating for this reason or should be shielded?**

*You don't need to let us know if we're not due to come to your home. However, if you book an emergency repair and you and/or your family members have symptoms of Coronavirus or are self-isolating for this reason, it is important to let us know before we attend. Gas servicing remains a legal obligation and we will work with you as safely as possible in order to carry this out at an appropriate time.*

#### **What can I do to keep safe?**

*We would urge you to follow the [Government advice](#) to reduce the spread of this virus and that of [NHS](#) to stop the spread of infection.*

### Repairs

#### **What repairs are you carrying out at present?**

*In doing all we can to help stop coronavirus spreading and to ensure your safety and that of our staff, we are only attending to emergency repairs until further notice. An*

*emergency repair is an issue that is causing significant damage to your home or is a significant risk to your health or safety. If you have an emergency repair please contact us. We will take a common-sense approach to non-urgent issues which are affected by COVID-19 related restrictions and we are continually reviewing repairs that can be completed safely and maintain safe distancing. These jobs are likely to be external works e.g. paths, fencing and arboriculture services.*

### **Can I still call to report a repair?**

*Yes, you can report a routine repair and when restrictions are lifted we will schedule an appointment with you. We are only able to attend to emergency repairs at the moment. An emergency repair is an issue that is causing significant damage to your home or is a significant risk to your health or safety. We ask that you provide accurate information when answering the health screening questions which will ensure we keep all members of your household, our staff and contractors safe.*

### **What happens if I have or did have a repair booked.**

*If we've cancelled your appointment and/or job because it's a routine repair and not an emergency repair, we'll contact you when normal service delivery resumes to enable you to rebook the job and appointment.*

### **How will emergency repairs be carried out safely?**

*We are making sure our team are fit to work each day and we won't send unwell operatives into your home. When they're working in your home, they will maintain a 2-metre safe distance from you and your family members, where possible we would ask that you and your family members occupy another room or part of your home while we complete the emergency repair.*

### **What can I do to make sure any visits to my property are carried out safely?**

*It is important to tell us if you or your family are symptomatic of COVID-19 or being shielded when reporting emergency repairs so we can take the appropriate precautionary action. You can also make sure you keep a safe distance from our tradespeople and follow [Government advice](#) on hygiene before and after the visit.*

### **Will my kitchen or bathroom replacement go ahead?**

*We have temporarily suspended all our planned improvement work to resident's homes to install things like new kitchens, bathrooms and boilers. We will reschedule this work once normal service delivery resumes.*

### **Will maintenance and cleaning still be completed?**

*We are continuing to try to maintain our cleaning service, we may have to provide a reduced service due to staff availability, the provision of Personal Protective Equipment and the assessed risks. Grounds maintenance services have been suspended, but we are continually reviewing and identifying those works which can be safely recommended.*

## **[Rent and Income](#)**

### ***Should I continue to pay my rent during this outbreak?***

*Yes, you should continue to pay your rent on time and abide by all other terms of your tenancy agreement to the best of your ability. The government has a strong package of financial support available and if your ability to pay rent is not affected, please continue to make payments in the usual way.*

### ***What should I do if I do not have enough income to pay my rent?***

*If you are unable to pay your rent, please contact us at the earliest opportunity. We are here to help and provide advice to those whose finances are impacted as a result of COVID-19. We are taking an understanding and realistic approach to ensure we don't create unnecessary pressure on our residents whose incomes are affected.*

### ***What help can you provide if I don't have enough income to pay my rent?***

*Our Housing Teams are available to provide support and advice and we will work with you to find a way forward that we can both achieve and stick to. We commit to not taking unreasonable action with those struggling to pay rent as a result of COVID-19.*

### ***Will you be offering residents a rent break?***

*Unfortunately, not. Your rent will still need to be paid. However, if you're experiencing difficulties in meeting your rent payments, just get in touch and we can talk it through together.*

### ***I am worried my income will be affected or is affected by this outbreak?***

*You can find more information on Government support for employers and employees [here](#) and talk to us if you are worried about what this may mean.*

### ***Who else can provide support if I am worried about paying my rent?***

*If you are worried about being unable to pay your rent, or if you are in financial difficulty, advice is available from specialist providers [here](#) and [here](#). You can also talk to your Local Authority who may be able to help if you are suffering financial hardship with things like Council tax reductions.*

### ***My employment and earnings are at risk, what can I do?***

*If you fall into financial difficulties due to a change in your employment or earnings, for example, you may qualify for Universal Credit. Find more information about Universal Credit [click here](#).*

*If you are self-employed or are a member of a partnership who are affected by COVID-19 the Government had announced an income support scheme, more details can be found [here](#).*

### ***Is my home at risk during this outbreak?***

*We commit to not taking unreasonable action during this difficult time and we are here to provide advice and support. A three month delay on eviction proceedings has been put in place by the Government and any notices issued will be suspended for three months.*

### ***What if I'm on Universal Credit?***

The government is increasing the standard Universal Credit allowance by around £1,000 per year for 12 months from 6 April 2020.

If you're already claiming Universal Credit you do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for at least 3 months, starting from Thursday 19 March 2020. People will continue to receive their benefits as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre in person are suspended.

Jobcentres remain open, but only to support people who are not able to use phones and online, including homeless people.

You can access your [online journal](#) or call the [Universal Credit helpline](#) (0800 328 5644).

If your income reduces because you have coronavirus, you have to self-isolate, or are caring for someone in your household who is affected, your Universal Credit should change to take this into account. The Minimum Income Floor (which applies to the self-employed) will also be relaxed for those affected by coronavirus.

Find out more click [here](#).

### **What if I claim disability benefits?**

There will be no reviews or reassessments for Universal Credit (UC), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit for the next 3 months, whether for existing or new claims.

For PIP claimants, if an assessment has already taken place this will continue to be processed. If an assessment has been scheduled, claimants will be contacted by the assessment provider to discuss how this will be taken forward.

ESA and UC claimants whose cases have been referred to the provider will be contacted to take this forward.

### **I am struggling with my energy bills what can I do?**

Gas and electricity suppliers are making sure that people can get help with paying their bills and do not get cut off during the virus outbreak. If you're on a prepayment meter, you will receive help if you can't get out to top up. This may include credit being sent in the post or funds automatically added to your meter.

Find more information [here](#) and if you are struggling to get out to top up your meter or pay your energy bills of, talk to your supplier?

### **I am a shared owner, how does this outbreak affect me?**

Shared owners should continue to meet their financial commitments where possible. The government has introduced a strong package of financial support, so where you can, you should still pay rent to us and your mortgage to your lender as normal.

### **I am a shared owner and I am struggling to pay my rent/mortgage.**

Most shared owners will pay both rent and a mortgage. Like other mortgage holders, if you are a shared owner who is struggling to meet your mortgage payments as a result of Covid-19 you will be able to request a mortgage payment holiday from your lender.

If you are unable to pay your rent, please contact us at the earliest opportunity. We are here to help and provide advice to those whose finances are impacted as a result of COVID-19. We are taking an understanding and realistic approach to ensure we don't create unnecessary pressure on our residents whose incomes are affected.

## Compliance

### ***Will you continue to service my gas boiler?***

Government guidelines state that we must adhere to gas safety regulations. Gas servicing is an essential service which ensures the safety of our residents. The guidance is clear and means that we must continue to carry out all scheduled inspections and tests where required, if possible and where safe to do so. Therefore, we have reinstated gas safety inspections and we will contact you if your service is due.

### ***Will you continue to carry out other safety and servicing checks?***

We will continue to carry out essential safety checks and servicing along with routine checks/testing where it is safe to do so, to protect you and our staff.

### ***What happens if my alarm is triggered?***

If there is an emergency and the fire alarm is triggered, please follow your building's usual procedure. Where possible, please try to also follow social distancing guidelines for your own safety.

## Lettings

### ***I have been offered a new home, what happens now?***

Unfortunately, we are unable to conduct new sign ups at this time until further notice. However, we are utilising virtual tenancy sign up arrangement for any emergency sign ups.

### ***My tenancy is due to end, what happens now?***

***If you are due to move out, please contact us to finalise arrangements. We can arrange for you to post your keys on your final day of your tenancy.***

*If you are unable to move out of your property at the end of your notice period please contact us to let us know. We will contact you to discuss how long you need to remain living at the property and make arrangements for you to return your keys at a later date. We will continue to charge you a weekly rent whilst you remain living there.*

### ***I am due to exchange properties what happens now?***

To ensure the safety of residents and our staff, we've made changes to our lettings service and over the next few weeks we'll offer our vacant homes only to individuals in an emergency. This includes those at significant risk of harm or homelessness. All other lettings and mutual exchanges in our homes will be postponed temporarily.

### ***I am being considered for a new home what happens now?***

We are currently only considering new lettings for emergencies. If you are in an emergency housing situation and at risk of homelessness, please contact your local authority to discuss. We will assist wherever it is safe for us to do so.

## Older persons living

### ***Can I still use the communal social spaces where I live?***

*Communal spaces will no longer be open for social activities and gatherings at this time to try and reduce the spread of this virus. This is particularly important as these spaces tend to be in areas where customers/residents that should be shielded live. For health and safety reasons we are also temporarily closing your communal kitchen and bathroom facilities. Please don't use the water supply or appliances, including communal sinks, toilets and handbasins. Laundry facilities will remain open. Please follow [public health guidance](#) when using these facilities; if someone else is using them, stay 2 metres away or use them later, wash your hands regularly and ensure surfaces are clean.*

### ***Can I still attend social events?***

*All social events at your scheme, such as coffee mornings, should not continue. Whilst we understand this may be disappointing to hear, this is in line with Public Health England guidance to limit your risk of contracting the virus.*

### ***Can we still have visitors to our homes?***

*We would urge you not to invite visitors to your home unless it is absolutely necessary to provide care or support to a vulnerable person or deliver supplies to ensure your safety.*

### ***Are you able to provide us with any additional support?***

*We're making welfare calls to those we understand may be vulnerable to see if we can help with anything. We will try our best to support you – either ourselves, or try and find a support network that can. Please contact us to talk about how we may be able to help you if you feel you are vulnerable on 01284 767224.*

## **Neighbourhood**

### ***Will you still be investigating anti-social behaviour?***

*Yes, we will continue to investigate reports of ASB and support our residents and their communities in tackling this. If you're experiencing ASB, you can contact us and we will put you in touch with a member of staff who can help. Whilst we are currently not able to offer home visits, we are working closely with our partner agencies such as the Police in trying to tackle and prevent issues as they arise. If you have been the victim of crime you can contact Victim Support on their freephone number **0808 1689 111** and information can also be found online at [here](#). They will be able to offer support to you to recover from the effects of crime and help to move forward from this.*

### ***What do I do if I am suffering domestic abuse?***

*Unfortunately, home for some of our residents may not be a place of safety, particularly at this time. Please rest assured Flagship and our partner agencies remain committed to supporting you with this issue and help can be found. If you are in immediate danger, please call 999 and ask for the police. Further information regarding domestic abuse can be found on the safeguarding section of our [website](#).*

***I am worried about my neighbour/family member living in one of your homes?***

*It's really important to look out for each other. Please get in contact with us if you're concerned about the welfare of anyone living in our homes as our safeguarding team may be able to help. If you feel someone is at immediate risk of harm please or call 999.*

***Can children still use the playgrounds?***

*In line with government policy to help avoid the spread of COVID-19. You must not enter playgrounds or play on any of the equipment until further notice.*

