

Tenant briefing note 2: COVID-19



Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we will continue to take the necessary steps and precautions to try to minimise the risk to our customers and staff. In line with recent UK and Scottish Government advice we will no longer provide a service from our office at 1 Cressy Street but be reassured that our staff are still available to deal with your enquiries and request for support by telephone at the usual number on 0141 445 4418 or you can email us at enquiries@linthouseha.com

We know that these are increasingly worrying and stressful times for tenants and families and we are continuing to monitor the situation and identify relevant advice and support to share with tenants.

The following information focuses on:

- our repairs service and reporting a repair;
- advice on welfare benefits and the help available to pay your rent; and
- information on the help and support that is available in the local community

If you have any tenancy issues or concerns then please do not hesitate to phone the office.

Our Customer Services Team is working hard to try to contact our older and more vulnerable tenants and will extend this to all tenants as soon as we can. Regardless of age, if you feel vulnerable or you have concerns about your neighbour or anyone in the community, then let us know and we will do all we can to help. Please also see section 3 in this information leaflet for help and support available in the Linthouse/Govan area.

We will continue to keep you up to date through our website at www.linthouseha.com and social media Twitter account at @linthouseHA.

We want to reassure you that tenant and staff wellbeing is our number one priority. This is why we will continue to take measures to limit the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) following official advice.

While our office is closed, we are working hard to ensure the critical and essential services that make a difference to our community continue to operate. We appreciate that many of our customers prefer to meet face-to-face with our staff. However, in the interest of protecting staff, tenants and the wider public, we will be limiting face-to-face contact to only a few unavoidable exceptions.

While these measures are in place, all contact with staff should be made by email or telephone in the first instance. Whenever direct contact is required, we will take steps to identify whether those we will be meeting are vulnerable to the virus through a series of questions based on the latest UK and Scottish Government advice. We will then take steps to facilitate direct contact safely for everyone – bearing in mind that some people can be carriers of the virus without showing symptoms.

Ultimately, we are dedicated to protecting those most vulnerable from the effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19), and we are working with a wide range of partners to support those most at risk. Thank you for the time you have taken to read this update and the following information. We want to reassure you of our commitment to you as a tenant and customer during this uncertain time.

1. Reporting a Repair

Following the advice of the UK and Scottish Governments, our contractors will now only be permitted to carry out emergency repairs with immediate effect. This means that for the time being we can only accept and carry out emergency repairs.

Please contact us on 0141 445 4418 if you have an emergency repair in your home. You can still get advice on non-emergency repairs but we may have to delay instructing the work until a later date.

- Emergency repairs include:
- Loss of Heating or Hot water
- Loss of water supply
- Blocked Drains including within common area
- WC not flushing
- Loss of power
- Damaged electrical fittings
- Property not secure including windows broken
- Trip hazards within home and common area
- Water ingress

When you contact us about your emergency repair we will continue to ask you some questions about your current situation and whether you are self-isolating so that we can understand how best to protect you and your family, as well as the member of staff that attends your home. The questions may include:

- Have you had contact with anyone who may be infected with the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?
- Do you have any of these symptoms – cough, fever or shortness of breath?

Please be patient with us while we ask these questions. These are required to protect the health and wellbeing of you, our staff and our contractors, which is essential in allowing us to maintain services.

If it is deemed absolutely essential that a member of staff does attend your home, they will:

- Ask some further questions at the front door before entering the property
- Distance themselves by at least two metres from anyone in the property
- Avoid touching surfaces where possible
- Wear protective gloves and other additional protection equipment where necessary
- Ask you if they can wash their hands before and after the visit, if you are happy for them to do so

Gas Servicing

Please be aware that our Gas Servicing contractor has currently postponed all gas servicing with the exception of empty houses for the next three weeks. We will seek to rearrange all upcoming servicing visits as quickly as possible as soon as the situation allows.

Tenants with services already arranged will receive a text message update from the contractor on the day of the previously arranged service notifying them of the cancellation.

2. Paying your Rent

If you need any help or advice with your rent account or if you are worried about a change in circumstances due to loss of earnings, please contact the Customer Services or Welfare Rights Team on the usual number at the office.

We can also assist with income maximisation and tenancy issues. It is important you keep in touch with us if you are experiencing problems so that we can provide you with the help and support that you require.

You should continue to pay your rent as normal and you can do this in a number of ways:

- Direct Debit which we can set up by phone
- By using your AllPay rent card at any Post Office or shop with a Pay Point terminal.
- Online at www.allpayments.net (you will need the reference number on your AllPay rent payment card to pay online)

We understand that the coming weeks may have an impact on the income of some of our tenants and customers. If you feel you will have difficulties paying your rent remember to contact us so we can assist you. We have our own Welfare Rights Team that may be able to help you apply for any benefits you might now be entitled to. The following information is a summary of some of the help available.

Statutory Sick Pay

Those who follow advice to stay at home and who cannot work as a result will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP), even if they are not themselves sick. Anyone not eligible to receive sick pay, including those earning less than an average of £118 per week, some of those working in the gig economy, or self-employed people, is able to claim Universal Credit and or contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

The DWP has also confirmed arrangements to support people who are either infected by the virus or have been advised to self-isolate including the following:

- Statutory sick pay will be paid from day one, rather than the fourth day of illness (to be put in force from 13th March 2020)
- If employees need to provide evidence to their employer that they need to stay at home due to the coronavirus, they will be able to get it from NHS 111 Online instead of having to get a fit note from their GP – this is currently being developed and will be made available soon
- All assessments for sickness or disability benefits are being suspended from 17th March 2020 for three months. Existing claimants will continue to receive payment until their assessments is rearranged
- People who need to claim ESA or UC because of coronavirus will not be required to produce a fit note
- When claimants inform the DWP that they are self isolating or have been diagnosed with coronavirus, they will not be sanctioned and will have their claimant commitment reviewed and revised to remove mandatory work requirements for the period of sickness

- Those affected by coronavirus will be able to apply for UC and can receive up to a month's benefit advance without having to physically attend a Jobcentre
- The seven waiting days for ESA for new claimants will not apply for those affected by coronavirus, so will be payable from day one
- Any claims made for ESA or UC by people infected by coronavirus or by those required to self-isolate will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work without the requirement for medical evidence or undergoing a Work Capability Assessment.

Due to the spread of the coronavirus we have had to prioritise key services and support the most vulnerable.

Council Tax / Benefits

You can continue to pay your Council tax in the usual manner. We have been advised that in order to ensure available staff are focusing on delivering the Council's key services, Glasgow City Council Tax department has suspended all telephone and face-to-face contact.

They will not take action at this time to implement Council Tax recovery, but you must continue to pay by the methods available to prevent you from falling into Council Tax arrears.

Welfare Fund

Glasgow City Council Community Care Grant telephone enquiry line has been temporarily suspended, but they continue to operate their Crisis Grant enquiry line which remains open 09:00 to 16:00 each day.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

All existing awards for DHP awarded due to under occupancy will be continued up until 05/04/2021.

Existing awards due to Benefit Cap will be continued up until 31/08/20 then each case will be reviewed.

All other awards of DHP will be assessed in conjunction with a new application form being submitted.

Universal Credit

Tenants affected by the Coronavirus who are worried about paying their rent can claim Universal Credit from the Department of Work and Pensions which includes support for paying rent (housing costs) if eligible. The UK Government has introduced some changes to make this easier. If eligible, you can apply for Statutory Sick Pay and Universal Credit and you should do this as soon as possible.

In addition to the annual increase of 1.7% the Universal Credit Standard Allowance will increase by £86.67 per month (the equivalent of £20 per week) for one year. This means that from 6th April 2020 the UC standard allowance for a single person over 25 will increase from £317.82 per month to £409.89 per month.

New claimants to Universal Credit should remember that Council Tax Reduction requires a separate application. Applications can be submitted online at <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction>.

Please also remember that you need to update your Universal Credit journal with your new rent charge due from the 1st April 2020. You need to do this on the 1st April 2020 as the UC system does not allow you to do it before this date. This is to make sure that your entitlement to housing costs changes to the new monthly amount. If you are unsure of the new rent charge, please contact the office for confirmation.

For support and further information, please contact our Customer Services or Welfare Rights Team.

Being Laid Off

You may be entitled to guaranteed pay if your employer has asked you to stay at home or take unpaid leave if there's not enough work for you. A lay-off is if you are off work for at least 1 working day. You are entitled to guaranteed pay during a lay off or short-time working. The maximum you can get is £29 a day for 5 days in any 3-month period - so a maximum of £145. If you usually earn less than £29 a day, you'll get your normal daily rate. If you work part-time, your entitlement is worked out proportionally.

To find out more and to apply please visit www.gov.uk/lay-offs-short-timeworking/guarantee-pay or contact our Welfare Rights Team on 0141 445 4418 or enquiries@linthouseha.com.

Self-Employed and Small Businesses

The Scottish Government has announced a rescue package for businesses and the cash is being made available to support business through the COVID-19 pandemic.

It will include rates relief, grants for small businesses and a £50m Hardship Fund for the self-employed or people who lose their jobs as a result of measures taken to limit the spread of the virus.

A dedicated helpline has been set up to help businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities receive support with their tax affairs. Through this, businesses may be able to agree a bespoke Time to Pay arrangement. If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax due to COVID-19, call HMRC's dedicated helpline on 0800 0159 559.

An employee retention scheme has been set up which aims to assist employees who have been advised to take a leave of absence as a result of COVID-19. The scheme will pay 80% salary (up to £2,500pm). This applies to workers who are off work for a period and kept on payroll as opposed to being laid off. This scheme is not fully operational yet but will run for minimum 3 months and be backdated to 01/03/20. Employers will apply directly for this scheme via HMRC

TV licence fee changes

Free licence fees for up to 3.7 million pensioners had been due to be scrapped on 1st June of this year. In light of the coronavirus situation, this has been delayed until August 2020. Last year, it was announced that only low-income households where one person receives pension credit will still be eligible for a free TV Licence.

The Welfare Rights Team has been maximising Pension Credit awards through benefit reassessments for our pensioner customers. If you have not already had an assessment and would like one carried out, please contact our Team on 0141 445 4418.

Please note the above is subject to change and we will continually review this information to provide regular updates to tenants.

3. Help and advice in the local community

Our staff have been contacting vulnerable tenants to ensure they are safe and keeping well. We have been asking tenants how they are, if they have support, if they have sufficient supplies and advising tenants we are here to support them as best we can in this uncertain situation. We have been advising of priority shopping times and signposting to The Preshal Trust and Govan Youth Information Project Food Service.

The Preshal Trust are currently running a phone support service but on Monday 30th March they are hoping to set up a food support programme to the vulnerable and over 70s. They are currently organising food parcels which can be collected by individuals outside the The Preshal Trust Building.

The GYIP minibus and The Salvation Army food van will be stationed across Govan at five venues for 2 hours each day from 11-1pm offering a selection of hot and cold food. This service is free of charge, but they ask young people & tenants to be respectful and to only ask for what they need.

Monday:	Howat St, Govan	11am – 1pm
Tuesday:	Burndyke Square, Govan Cross	11am – 1pm
Wednesday:	Govan Cross, Govan	11am – 1pm
Thursday:	Elizabeth St, Ibrox 1	1am -1pm
Friday:	Shaw St, Govan	11am – 1pm

For more information on the services available in the local and wider community please click on the link to [Community Resources at 24032020](#). Please note that these services may be subject to change and we will do our best to keep you up to date with any changes.

We know this is very difficult time for all of our all tenants, however it is really important we keep in touch to ensure no one is left completely alone and a call of reassurance is always available from LHA staff. If you would like to call us please phone Deborah direct on 0141 445 8420 or the office on 141 445 4418.

We have been contacting tenants aged 70 years + and will move on to tenants aged 60 years +, however we would like to contact everyone to ensure they are all safe at this time.

So far our vulnerable tenants report that they are coping well at this very difficult time, with lots of support from neighbours, friends and family which is keeping community spirits up and showing true commitment for those in need at this time. We encourage everyone to keep up the good work.