

Coronavirus

PHA Homes would like to share with you our current position on the rapidly changing impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on our service to our tenants and residents.

We have been operating business as usual and encouraging good hygiene by all staff members, as advised by the Government and the NHS. However, as matters are rapidly changing, we have decided to close the office to all visitors from **Monday 23rd March** for the foreseeable future. We will however be able to answer your phone calls or emails.

Anyone wishing to pay their rent can do so by cash through the office letter box, but please clearly mark your address on the envelope. Alternative methods of paying rent include paying by debit card, using Pay Point outlets, standing order or direct debit.

We would ask all tenants & residents phoning in to request repairs to inform us if they believe they have, or anybody in the household have, any symptoms of Coronavirus so that we can inform any of our contractors or staff who may need to attend your property, to ensure we are giving them all relevant information and keep you and them as safe as possible.

Please note that from **Monday 23rd March** we will be offering an essential repair service only.

If reporting an essential repair, we ask that those of you who have developed flu-like symptoms (cough, fever or respiratory problems) not to arrange appointments with our staff members or contractors unless it is an emergency. Please follow the self-isolation instruction given in the [Government and Public Health England self-isolation instructions](#). If you are in any doubt [please refer to the questionnaire and information pages](#) provided by 111 NHS on-line.

Staff are also carrying out only essential home visits from **Monday 23rd March**.

We are mindful of the ever changing circumstances regarding Coronavirus and will keep tenants & residents updated through our website whenever possible. If you have any concerns or wish to speak to a member of staff, then please contact us on **01730 263589**.

The measures we are taking is to ensure that we can continue to offer you the best service we can during this very difficult period.

Frequently asked questions:

Maintenance and repairs service:

Q What should I do if I have a repair arranged but have symptoms linked to Coronavirus?

A Please inform PHA straight away so that we can liaise with the contractor. We may be unable to complete your repair unless it is classed as essential while you have symptoms.

Q What do I do if I have a repair to report but already have symptoms of Coronavirus?

A Continue to report the repair to PHA and we will determine whether the repair is essential or can be left until you are no longer at risk. If the repair is essential, we will make every effort to complete the repair for you.

Q Why are you only carrying out essential repairs?

A PHA have taken the decision to only carry out essential repairs so that we can protect our contractors and tenants/residents from the spread of the virus as much as possible. This enables us to provide a good service for all urgent repairs during this time.

Q What is classed as an essential repair?

A Any repair that may cause further damage or danger to any person would be classed as an essential repair. This may include issues such as leaks, electrical issues, doors not opening or locking correctly, smoke alarms not working or making unusual noises, a toilet not flushing where it is the only toilet in the property. Heating and boiler repairs continue to be classed as essential.

Q What is not an essential repair?

A Generally, repairs to fencing, sheds, washing lines, internal doors including kitchen cupboards, one plug socket not working would not be classed as essential repairs.

Q Why are you continuing to carry out external works?

A Where external works can be completed without contact with the tenant/resident or a need to enter the property, we will strive to continue with these works to enable our contractors to meet their targets.

We are constantly reviewing our processes to ensure we can still deliver the best service possible in the current situation

Difficulty in paying your rent as a result of Covid-19 (Coronavirus)?

Q: *How may Covid-19 (Coronavirus) affect my ability to pay my rent? What help can I get?*

A Covid-19 is causing significant disruption across the country and this is likely to continue for some months. PHA Homes is working within company policy and procedures and in accordance with the ever-changing guidance from the Government and governing bodies regarding the current situation in relation to Covid-19.

There are many tenants and residents whose income may be affected by Covid-19; example situations include:

- Employers may need to put their staff on reduced hours.
- Schools may send children home from school so tenants cannot work as they have to stay at home to look after the children.
- Employers may not be able to pay staff at all and have to terminate their contract and as a result tenants may become unemployed and seeking new work.
- Self-employed tenants may not be able to work as their customers don't want them in their home.
- Some tenants may become ill or have to self-isolate and only be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay.

All of these may result in reduced or no income for tenants which could leave tenants in financial difficulty and struggling to pay their rent.

PHA Homes regularly deal with tenants who are struggling and understands how to help those tenants manage their rent payments and seek the best advice possible in order to sustain their tenancy and remain in their home.

PHA Homes is committed to supporting our tenants and helping our tenants to maximise income during challenging times.

As a small non-profit Housing Association PHA Homes relies on the rental income from tenants to sustain the business and therefore all tenants are still liable to pay their rent in advance in accordance with their tenancy agreement or lease.

PHA's top tips for dealing with arrears are:

- If you are currently in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit then you need to update them as a matter of urgency if your circumstances change and provide them with the necessary evidence they request as soon as possible.
- If you are not currently in receipt of either of these, then you should seek advice from Citizens Advice Bureau as soon as possible. They will advise you about your entitlement to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help pay your rent. You will have to submit the claim as a matter of urgency to avoid delay in receiving your benefits.
- Always update Housing Benefit or Universal Credit immediately so to get your claim assessed as soon as possible, as payment will likely be delayed and may not be backdated.
- Always stay in communication with PHA Homes to provide regular updates on the actions you are taking to maintain your rent payments and resolve any arrears.

Furthermore, welfare benefits have introduced temporary regulations if you are infected, in isolation or caring for your child.

For example, 'New Style' Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) lifts the usual 7 day waiting period before the claim can commence. Universal Credit have also put various temporary regulations in place, we would advise you to contact your work coach for more information.

PHA Homes aims to keep tenants updated as and when further guidance is released as the situation develops and advice from the Government changes.

In the meantime, other useful resources include.

Support for those affected by Covid-19

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>

Understanding Universal Credit Coronavirus

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

Coronavirus: Employment rights and sick pay

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/social-policy/health/coronavirus-employment-rights-and-sick-pay/>

You can also seek advice from.

- Citizen Advice Bureau who can be contacted on 01730 264887 or
- National Debtline on 0808 8084000 or www.nationaldebtline.co.uk.

Should you have any further queries regarding this matter please do not hesitate to contact the Housing Team on 01730 263589, or email admin@phahomes.co.uk.