



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP

Minister of State for Housing

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street London
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3430

email: christopher.pincher@communities.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

Date: 18 May 2020

To all social housing residents in England,

I am writing to you today following the Prime Minister's announcement on 10 May to update you on the steps that the Government is taking to reopen society and support you and your family to move on with your lives. The safety, security and wellbeing of all social housing residents is a key priority for both Government and social landlords. This letter brings together the advice and support that we have put in place at this time.

Keeping you safe

Maintenance and Repairs

You should have a decent, warm and safe place to live. Many landlords have had to prioritise the repairs they provide. As we start to ease lockdown measures, landlords should be able to carry out routine as well as essential repairs for most households. There will be a backlog of repairs that they will need to address, so it may take longer than normal to carry out more non-essential work. However, please still contact your landlord if you think they need to carry out a repair. Operatives entering your home should notify you in advance of arrival, maintain a safe distance and follow hygiene procedures, as set out in this guidance: [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

No work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless it is to remedy a direct risk. In such a case, prior arrangements should be made to avoid any face to face contact, for example when answering the door. The operative should be up to date with the latest guidance on how to work safely.

External maintenance and services

We are expecting many landlords to resume external planned maintenance works and services. Operatives carrying out this work should adhere to the [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) guidance to ensure any such work may be carried out safely.

Internal planned maintenance will only take place in homes where residents are not shielding or self-isolating.

Your landlord may also carry out maintenance and repairs in empty properties, so that they can be re-let to new tenants. The operatives will be responsible for ensuring that this work is done safely.

Gas safety checks

Every year, people die and are seriously injured by poorly maintained gas appliances. Landlords should make every effort to abide by statutory safety obligations, such as annual gas safety inspections, particularly as people are spending most of their time at home.

If you are self-isolating, you should inform your landlord who will rearrange the gas safety check to take place after your isolation has ended.

If you are shielding, your landlord will balance the risk presented taking into account factors such as the age and type of appliance, previous maintenance history and date of the last gas check. In some situations, this might indicate that the gas safety inspection should still go ahead. In such a case, prior arrangements should be made to avoid any face to face contact, for example when answering the door. The operative should be up to date with the latest guidance on how to work safely.

If you smell gas, or if you have concerns about the safety of your appliances, you should call the gas emergency service provider on 0800 111 999, and switch off appliances until the gas emergency supplier, or a registered gas engineer, has attended and advised that the appliances are safe to use.

Building safety

We are clear that making buildings safe, including remediating high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding or insufficient fire safety measures, remains a top priority for the Government. You can find more information on building safety here: [Remediation and COVID-19: Building Safety update](#)

For tenants seeking to move home

The Government has made changes to legislation to make clear that people who wish to move home can do so and has published [advice on home moving during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) that provides important public health information to ensure that moving home and key activities around this can happen safely.

This change will apply to tenants who are seeking to transfer, move into alternative accommodation in the private rented sector, or mutually exchange. You are strongly encouraged to read the guidance if you are considering moving home during this time. The process of finding and moving into a new home will need to be different, those involved in the process will have to adapt in ways to ensure that the risk of spreading coronavirus is reduced as far as possible. This is particularly important for those who are shielding. If you have any questions about the guidance or how it applies to you, you are encouraged to speak with your landlord.

Supporting you

Support for existing renters

During this period, you should continue to pay rent and abide by all other terms of your tenancy agreement to the best of your ability. If you have trouble paying your rent, you should speak to your landlord as soon as possible. The Government has a strong package of financial support available and you can find more information on this here: [COVID-19: guidance for employees](#)

The Government took early steps to introduce legislation to require landlords to give three months' notice of their intention to seek possession of a property (serve notice that they want to end the tenancy). This means that it will be three months before a landlord can apply to the court to proceed with any possession action. This legislation currently applies to all notices issued between the dates of 26 March 2020 and 30 September 2020 inclusive (although this period can be extended if needed).

In addition, the courts have suspended ongoing housing possession claims from progressing for 90 days from 27 March, meaning that cases currently in the system or any cases about to go into it cannot progress to the stage where someone could be evicted. The suspension applies to all housing possessions proceedings in the rented and leasehold sectors. We are also strongly advising landlords not to issue new notices seeking possession during this challenging time without a very good reason to do so. You can find more information for tenants here: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for Landlords and Tenants](#)

Local Council Tax Support

The Government has provided councils in England with £500 million of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. The majority of this fund will be used to provide working-age Local Council Tax Support claimants with a further discount in their Council Tax bill. Please contact your local council to find out if you are eligible for this additional support. You can find out more information on the new hardship fund here: [Council tax: COVID-19 hardship fund 2020 to 2021 - guidance](#)

Wellbeing

The coronavirus outbreak has had an effect on everyone's daily lives. These guides provide advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing: [Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

You can find more information on supporting children and young people here: [COVID-19: guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#)

The Government is determined that for those staying home to stay safe does not need to lead to loneliness. We have outlined our plan to tackle loneliness and you can find more information here: [Government launches plan to tackle loneliness during coronavirus lockdown](#)

If you are feeling lonely or isolated there are a number of organisations that you can talk to. You can find more information here: [Let's Talk Loneliness](#)

Support for extremely vulnerable people

Around 2.2 million people in England with underlying severe health conditions who must be protected, have been asked to stay at home. People in this group are able to register for a regular food box delivery online or via the dedicated hotline. Instructions on how to do this have been sent to the individual in a letter from the NHS. If you or a member of your family falls into this group, you can register for support here: [Get coronavirus support as a clinically extremely vulnerable person](#)

Anti-social behaviour

Social landlords, the police and councils have a significant range of powers to tackle anti-social behaviour. In response to the coronavirus outbreak all possession cases before the courts, including possession action against tenants for anti-social behaviour, has been suspended for three months. Your landlord can still support you if you are suffering from anti-social behaviour. Please contact your landlord for assistance if you are concerned. You can also contact your local council's community safety team for advice and support.

Support for victims of domestic abuse

The Government acknowledges that staying at home can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse. For anyone who is or feels they are at risk of abuse, it is important to remember that there is help and support available to you, including police response, online support, helplines, refuges and other services. The household isolation instruction as a result of coronavirus does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse. You can find further information here: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): support for victims of domestic abuse](#)

Further advice on coronavirus

The Government's advice on coronavirus is available in one place, covering a range of topics including protecting yourself and others from coronavirus, and work, financial support and money. You can find out more information here: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)

You can also find more general information here: [Find out what you can do if you're struggling because of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

The Government has set out its plan to return life to as near normal as we can, for as many people as we can, as quickly and fairly as possible in order to safeguard livelihoods, but in a way that is safe and continues to protect our NHS. You can find more information on the Government's plan here: [Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#)

Please stay alert, control the virus and save lives.



RT HON CHRISTOPHER PINCHER MP