

Engaging with tenants about the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

(updated 25 March)



Chartered
Institute of
Housing

In these uncertain times, it will be important to engage with your residents to provide them with both information and reassurance. We have been talking to housing providers about what they are doing, and have collated the following things for you to consider:

1. Share the latest public information with your residents

Things are changing rapidly. Be sure to share the latest information so your tenants keep up to date, including information on the following:

- Handwashing

Wash hand regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>

- Staying at home if you have symptoms

Anyone with symptoms should stay at home for at least 7 days. If you live with other people, the whole household should stay at home for 14 days.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

- Staying at home and away from others

Everyone should now be staying at home apart from for very specific reasons:

- basic shopping necessities (food or medicine)
- one form of exercise a day
- a medical need or to care or help a vulnerable person
- traveling to and from work where this work cannot be done from home

This also means that, except for the children of key workers, children should no longer be going to school.

When you do go out stay 2 metres away from other people. All gatherings of more than two people in public have been stopped and non essential shops and community spaces have been closed.

People who are over 70, with underlying health issues or who are pregnant should be particularly stringent about following social distances measures.

These people are advised to stay at home for 12 weeks. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

This BBC page gives simple clear advice on all the topics above with easy to follow visuals.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51711227>

Using simple graphics like these on newsletters to tenants could be an effective way to communicate these important messages, particularly to those who aren't able to access digital technology.

Guidance for:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

COVID-19
GOOD PRACTICE #2

#CV19HOUSING

2. Encourage tenants to plan ahead

Help tenants to get ready by sharing information encouraging them to:

- Think about who is able to help them with shopping
- Set up online shopping accounts where possible
- Consider if they have all the medications they will need or any way to get them
- Consider who could help with commitments they might have to others outside their home.

Also, could they help others around them if they are not self-isolating? Could they put a card through neighbours doors offering help for people who are considered particularly vulnerable?

Could they volunteer to be an NHS volunteer responder? www.goodsamapp.org/NHS

3. Call tenants especially those who are vulnerable

Isolation and loneliness are going to be really big issues as the next few weeks (or possibly months) unfold. This could particularly be the case for older tenants. Whilst they might be safer at home, they could feel quite lonely as well. Drawing together a list of your vulnerable customers and calling those people once a week to see how they are could be a really be a lifeline to some people.

4. Reinforce your commitment to your customers and changes to your working procedures

Share information with tenants about your changing ways of working including:

- How tenants can get in touch as your office is now closed
- If they need a visit or a repair explain the new procedure

- Ask tenants to only book emergency repairs and explain how this repair will be carried out if they are self-isolating or in a vulnerable group
- Explain the support available for extra care sheltered and other specialist schemes
- **Provide reassurances of what will happen if they will not be able to pay their rent and let them know who to contact.**

5. Provide list of helpful contact telephone numbers, websites and contact points for those needing further support, these could include:

- Details for their local food banks
- Contact relating to access to benefits and other financial support mechanisms
- Local shops and pharmacies who are now providing home deliveries
- Any 'local support system' helpline numbers to deliver basic groceries and medicines to those most at risk and telephone 'buddy' services
- Medical information help points such the 111 corona virus webpage <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>
- Wellbeing websites and telephone numbers if they are feeling particularly anxious about the corona virus. For example Mind has some really useful information as does Age Concern UK and the Campaign to End Loneliness. Webpage links below.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses/coronavirus/>

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/coronavirus-and-social-isolation/>