

## **COVID-19: Social/Physical Distancing and hygiene advice and information for multi storeys and high density flats**

### **Purpose of document**

1. As the housing sector in Scotland responds to the coronavirus, it is important to have effective social/physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning measures in place in multi storeys and other blocks of flats which are densely populated.
2. There are specific challenges associated with social/physical distancing in multi storey buildings which are densely populated with significant numbers of people using shared facilities. There are also challenges of scale in providing effective cleaning and hygiene regimes in residential blocks with large populations and significant numbers of 'high touch' areas like handrails, door handles, lift panels and door entry systems.
3. This guidance is non-statutory. It provides information and advice for social landlords who manage multi storey blocks to help them to support residents, staff and contractors in maintaining effective social/physical distancing and cleaning standards in common areas and shared spaces during the coronavirus pandemic. It incorporates public health advice on minimising the transmission of infection, and provides practical examples of measures that can help to ensure multi storeys are safe environments for those who live and work there. Although this guidance refers primarily to multi storey blocks, the information set out is equally applicable to other blocks of flats which are densely populated with shared facilities and communal areas.
4. The guidance does not replace any need for landlords to carry out their own risk assessments in relation to COVID-19, and landlords will also want to consider producing their own local guidance to support staff working in multi storeys during the pandemic.

### **COVID-19: Social/ Physical distancing, cleaning and hygiene**

5. Social/physical distancing measures are of critical importance in stopping the spread of COVID-19, as reducing interaction with others reduces the opportunities for transmission of the infection. Detailed information on carrying out effective social/physical distancing is available on the [NHS Scotland website](#).
6. As well as transmitting through respiratory droplets and by direct contact with infected people, COVID-19 can be transmitted through contact with contaminated objects and surfaces. Robust, regular cleaning regimes are important in order to keep surfaces free of contamination, in particular, 'high touch' surfaces within shared spaces. Examples of high touch surfaces in a multi storey setting include lift touch-button panels, door entry panels, door handles and grab rails.
7. There are specific challenges associated with observing effective social/physical distancing and cleanliness in multi storeys or other densely populated residential

blocks where a significant number of people live close together and use the same facilities. Although some challenges will be consistent across all multi storeys, others will vary depending on factors like building layout and facilities on-site. Landlords will need to carry out their own assessment of the risks presented by COVID-19 within and around their buildings and decide what measures can be put in place to manage these risks effectively. They will also want to update their existing procedures and policies to ensure COVID-19 considerations are addressed.

8. The examples set out in this guidance will help to support risk assessment and provide practical suggestions for managing and mitigating identified risks. Risk assessment should be an ongoing process in the context of COVID-19 given the evolving nature of the pandemic.

### **Information**

9. Clear and concise information for tenants and residents on the specific measures in place within their building and the day to day actions they need to take to reduce the risk of infection transmission are particularly important. Leaflets, prominently displayed posters and up to date information on landlords' websites and social media are all effective ways of ensuring residents know what to do and how to do it. Examples of posters and leaflets currently used in multi storeys are included in this guidance at Annex A. All tenant and resident focused information should be regularly reviewed and updated promptly as necessary.

#### **Examples:**

1) One local authority has issued letters to the residents of its multi storeys setting out essential information about the service they can expect during the pandemic, information on social distancing, action to reduce infection transmission and broader information relevant at this time, for example waste disposal information.

2) Examples of tenant and resident focused information materials are included at Annex A.

### **Cleaning and hygiene**

10. Landlords should consider how they can carry out enhanced and more frequent cleaning in densely populated blocks like multi storeys during the period of the pandemic to minimise the risk of infection transmitting through contaminated surfaces. In particular:

- Enhanced, frequent daily cleaning focusing on 'high touch' surfaces which are in regular use;
- Ensure residents are aware of the provisions in place for bulk uplifts and that they are informed of any suspensions to current services;
- Litter and debris should be promptly removed and disposed of safely and hygienically; and

- Staff carrying out cleaning and litter removal work must be able to do this safely, with appropriate PPE.

**Examples:**

1) One local authority has increased the frequency of their cleaning schedule within their multi storeys, with all high touch points including lift button panels and door handles cleaned a minimum of three times daily, and more often as required. Staff doing this work have been provided with appropriate PPE and cleaning supplies.

2) Where staffing levels allow, one RSL is carrying out extra cleaning in common areas, disinfecting lifts and door entry panels every two hours.

**Accessing the building**

11. Although the ‘Stay at Home’ guidance which applies during the lockdown period will have reduced the number of non-residents entering buildings, a reasonable amount of movement will be taking place as residents shop, work and exercise. Staff and contractors will also need to access the building when required. The same social/physical distancing rules should be observed inside buildings as outside. Landlords should consider the information they supply to residents, staff and contractors to ensure people are aware of social/ physical distancing requirements, and may wish to consider any additional measures to ensure appropriate distancing is taking place.

**Example:**

One local authority has deployed Estates officers to move around buildings ensuring social/ physical distancing is observed and supplying information and advice to tenants and residents where required.

12. Residents, staff and contractors will continue to access their building as normal during the period of the pandemic- usually this will be done through a key fob system which helps to ensure access to the building is controlled. While there should be a considerable reduction in the number of visitors to the building during the lockdown phase, landlords should consider visitor access in any risk assessments, and may find it helpful to issue local guidance on this to on-site staff. Any guidance should also take into account access requirements for delivery services, in particular deliveries of food, medicine and other essential supplies to people who are shielding, high-risk or otherwise vulnerable at this time.

**Example:**

One local authority has produced ‘Safe System of work’ guidance for on-site staff in their multi storeys. This sets out guidance on interacting with contractors and other visitors to the building, and includes information on social/ physical distancing and hygiene advice.

13. The confined nature and size of lifts mean it is virtually impossible for social/physical distancing to be practiced safely. Landlords should carry out appropriate risk assessment on the lifts in their multi storeys in relation to COVID-19. They should have in place specific information for tenants and residents on use of the lifts during the pandemic and this information should be clearly communicated. In particular:

- Only members of the same household should share a lift;
- When waiting for a lift to arrive, people should physically distance from others waiting by two metres. Landlords can support distancing by, for instance, placing markings on foyer and corridor floors at two-metre intervals;
- To prevent lift overcrowding, residents should be encouraged to use stairwells where possible.

Lift control button panels and grab rails are high touch areas and should be considered for enhanced, high frequency cleaning.

14. Stairwells may see increased footfall as demand for lifts increases. Stairwells should be cleaned regularly and high touch areas such as banisters, handrails and door handles should be cleaned more frequently.

**Examples:**

Posters, leaflets and tenant-focused materials on use of lifts are included at Annex A.

**Other communal facilities**

15. Most multi storey blocks provide shared facilities, for example refuse disposal systems like rubbish chutes, and storage rooms. Many blocks also have dedicated laundry facilities, communal areas or designated community rooms.

16. Residents should be reminded of the requirement to physically distance in these areas, for example, by displaying posters and the use of floor markings to indicate a safe distance for people waiting to use facilities. Bin chute handles and storage door handles should also be considered for enhanced, higher frequency cleaning.

17. Laundry rooms are likely to present particular challenges for distancing at a time when demand for laundry facilities is likely to be higher whilst local laundrette facilities are closed. Landlords with laundry rooms should consider how best to continue to provide laundry facilities whilst allowing for safe physical distancing, for example through a booking or rota system.

18. Many buildings have dedicated communal spaces for residents to mix and/ or community rooms bookable by local groups and associations. During the lockdown period, all communal areas and community rooms should remain closed.

### Examples:

1) One RSL has extended opening times for laundry facilities in its multi storeys.

2) One local authority has suspended charges for the washers and dryers in the communal laundry rooms in their multi storey blocks to prevent residents having to queue at housing offices to have laundry cards credited. This local authority has also introduced a rota system to ensure residents can use the laundry room at a safe physical distance.

## Annex A: Example posters and leaflets

## Acknowledgements

With thanks to the following organisations for their contribution to this guidance:

- Clydebank Housing Association;
- North Ayrshire Council;
- North Lanarkshire Council;
- West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative Ltd;
- Wheatley Group;
- ALACHO (Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers);
- SFHA (Scottish Federation of Housing Officers).

Further information on this guidance is available from the Tenant Priorities Team, Scottish Government at [TPAdminsupport@gov.scot](mailto:TPAdminsupport@gov.scot).

Further information on the publicity materials and examples contained in this guidance can be obtained from the contributing landlords:

Clydebank Housing Association	<a href="mailto:info@clydebank-ha.org.uk">info@clydebank-ha.org.uk</a>	0141 941 1044
North Ayrshire Council	<a href="mailto:Grahamemans@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Grahamemans@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	07966804186
North Lanarkshire Council	<a href="mailto:llewellyns@northlan.gov.uk">llewellyns@northlan.gov.uk</a>	01698 274192
West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative	<a href="mailto:enquiries@wwhc.org.uk">enquiries@wwhc.org.uk</a>	0141 641 8628
Wheatley Group	<a href="mailto:info@wheatley-group.com">info@wheatley-group.com</a>	0800 479 7979

## Annex A: Posters, leaflets and information materials

## 1) Use of lifts

**GHA**

Better homes, better lives

### Coronavirus: using the lift.

We have introduced new cleaning measures to keep lifts as clean as possible. We are asking for your help to follow these simple steps:

- › Don't share the lift with anyone **outwith your household**
- › **Cover your mouth** when you cough
- › Take the **stairs** if you can (to stop the lifts getting overcrowded)
- › **Avoid touching your face** after touching anything like lift buttons
- › **Wash your hands** with soap or sanitiser after leaving the lift

**Remember, we're here to support you as much as we can. Thanks for your understanding.**

Need advice? We're here to help 24/7.

 [www.gha.org.uk](http://www.gha.org.uk)

 **0800 479 7979**

Glasgow Housing Association. A registered Scottish Charity No. SC034054

 **Wheatley Group**

# **CORONA VIRUS**

**In line with government guidance and in order to ensure social distancing of two metres, only one household or one person, where possible, should be using the lift at any given time**

**LIVE  
LEARN  
WORK  
INVEST  
VISIT**



## Use of Lifts Coronavirus (COVID-19)

For your safety please limit the use of the lift to **1 person** at a time unless you are with those staying in your household.

Current guidelines are: **stay at home**

- only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this cannot be done from home)
  - Stay 2 metres away from others
- wash your hands as soon as you get home



Belmont House, 57 Belmont Road, Cambuslang, G72 8PG  
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Registered Charity No. SCO38737 VAT Registration No. 180223636  
A registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014





## **Lifts & Social Distancing**

Please note in order to respect social distancing guidelines,  
**only one person is to be in a lift at any time unless they are from the same household.**

08 April 2020



*Please stay safe and don't go out unless absolutely necessary - follow Government advice.*

## 2) Information posters



# RESTRICTED ACCESS

Social distancing and restrictions have been introduced as part of a ramped-up response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

**During this time this office will be closed to members of the public.**

**Staff visitors will be restricted to one visitor at a time.**

**The door entry is controlled by staff within the office. If you can see that someone is at reception, please wait until we have finished with their enquiry. Please respect social distancing measures if anyone is leaving while you are waiting.**

**Thank you for your understanding during this time.**



Better homes, better lives

## Coronavirus

We are doing the best we possibly can in what are exceptionally difficult circumstances.

Although we're running a restricted range of services, **regular cleaning, patrols and fire safety checks in our multi-storey blocks are our priority.**

Where staffing levels allow, we will:

- › carry out **extra cleaning** in common areas
- › disinfect common areas such as door entry and lifts **every two hours.**

We would ask customers not to share the lift with anyone outwith their household.

Remember, we're here to support you as much as we can. **Thanks for your understanding.**

Need advice? We're here to help 24/7.

 [www.gha.org.uk](http://www.gha.org.uk)

Glasgow Housing Association. A registered Scottish Charity No. SC034054



### 3) Resident information letter



#### **Covid-19 Coronavirus Update 23rd March 2020**

Dear Tenant

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

Our priority is to ensure the continuity of critical services wherever possible and to ensure that our employees are protected. Some of our services are affected by the impact of the Covid-19 Coronavirus outbreak. This means we will be delivering essential community critical services and that non-essential services will be postponed. This will allow us to focus on the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The Concierge Station reception area is now closed to members of the public; however, **you can still contact the Concierge Station via your intercom handset in your flat.**

At present the Concierge Station will only carry out essential maintenance within the common areas. This includes the fire safety checks. We will be focusing our cleaning efforts on door handles to the entrances and the lift areas.

Whilst we are carrying out these tasks it will be your responsibility to ensure your own safety. You should follow advice from Health Protecting Scotland (NHS). Which include:

**Household isolation** will reduce the community spread of COVID-19. This means that everyone living in the same household as someone with symptoms of COVID-19 should follow 'stay at home' advice on **NHS Inform**.

**Social distancing measures** should be used by everyone to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This is strongly advised for people aged 70 or over, people with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women. The aim of introducing social distancing measures for everyone is to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

You can also go for a walk or exercise outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others. When entering the buildings please keep this safe distance, if you are waiting on the lift keep this safe distance also. **No more than 1 person should use the lift at any time.**

Further advice on social distancing is available on **NHS Inform**.

### **Individuals should:**

- Wash hands frequently with soap and hot water for 20 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand rub where available if no access to soap and water.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Not go to work if they or a household member has symptoms of COVID-19 (follow the stay at home guidance)
- Follow the social distancing advice
- Wherever possible, avoid direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and avoid using their personal items such as their mobile phone.
- Cover the nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing the nose. Dispose of all used tissues promptly into a waste bin. If you don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

### **Waste**

Household waste can be disposed of as normal. Bags should be kept small enough to fit in the bin chute. Do not leave any larger bags on landings as this poses health risks as well as a fire security risk.

**Landings should always be kept clear of any obstructions and tenants should clear any mess left from pets and visitors to their homes. This will be monitored in the interest of public safety during the current situation as we must protect safety of yourself and neighbours.**

### **Housing Enquiries**

We would encourage you to contact your local housing office by phone or by email.

Please contact us at any of our local housing offices if you have a housing related enquiry

**Irvine Area Office**

**Telephone: 01294 310150**

**Email: [irvinehousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:irvinehousing@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)**

### **Housing Repairs**

Please note that due to the current Covid-19 Coronavirus outbreak, all non-essential Building Services work have stopped. We are sorry for the inconvenience caused at this time and we will be in contact in the future regarding any outstanding repairs.

During this time, we can only arrange emergency repairs. If you have an emergency repair, please contact us on **01294 310 000**

### **Paying Your Rent**

If you can, you should continue to pay your rent as normal and you can do this in several ways:

- Direct Debit / Standing Order
- By telephone on **0845 603 0593** using a credit or debit card
- Online at [www.payments.northayrshire.gov.uk](http://www.payments.northayrshire.gov.uk)
- At any shop or garage which has a Pay Point terminal

### **Welfare Benefits and Debt Advice**

Welfare Benefits and Debt Advice is available to any North Ayrshire Council Tenant from our Welfare Reform Advice Team. Tenants who have concerns about their income or possible rent arrears can contact the team on **0300 999 4606** or **WelfareReformTeam@north-ayrshire.gov.uk** for support. We are aware of the potential for some tenant's income to be affected as a result of COVID-19, and we will work closely with these tenants to support them during this time.

**The DWP have made temporary changes to benefits during the coronavirus outbreak;**

#### **If you are already receiving support:**

Special arrangements are in place for people in receipt of benefits who cannot attend Jobcentre appointments because they are required to stay at home or are infected by coronavirus. The arrangements are:

- People who need to claim ESA or Universal Credit because of coronavirus will not be required to produce a fit note.
- When claimants "advise Jobcentre in good time" that they are staying at home or that they have been diagnosed with coronavirus, they will not be sanctioned – Jobcentre will review their conditionality requirements in their claimant commitment, to ensure they are reasonable.
- Claimants who are staying at home as a result of coronavirus will have their mandatory work search and work availability requirements removed to account for a period of sickness and will be treated as having Limited Capability for work.

#### **For people who need to make a new claim for financial support**

People who are required to stay at home or are infected by coronavirus may need financial support, and quickly. The legislation has been changed that:

- Those affected by coronavirus will be able to apply for Universal Credit and can receive up to a month's advance up front without physically attending a Jobcentre.
- The 7 waiting days for ESA for new claimants will not apply if they are suffering from coronavirus or are required to stay at home – so it will be payable from day one

## **Employees and self-employed people**

To make sure people in work can take the necessary time off to stay at home if they are suffering from coronavirus or to prevent its spread, changes have been made to Statutory Sick Pay and how Universal Credit supports self-employed claimants.

This includes:

- People who cannot work due to coronavirus and are eligible for Statutory Sick Pay will get it from day one, rather than from the fourth day of their illness – this measure applies retrospectively from 13 March 2020.
- Statutory Sick Pay will be payable to people who are staying at home on government advice, not just those who are infected, from 13 March 2020 – employers are urged to use their discretion about what evidence, if any, they ask for.
- If employees need to provide evidence to their employer that they need to stay at home due to coronavirus, they will be able to get it from the NHS 111 Online instead of having to get a fit note from their doctor – this is currently under development and will be made available soon.
- Self-employed claimants on Universal Credit who are required to stay at home or are ill as a result of coronavirus will not have a Minimum Income Floor (an assumed level of income) applied for a period while affected.

## **Health Assessments**

All health assessments have been suspended for 3 months this includes Personal Independence Payment, ESA and some Universal Credit.

- Claimants in receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit will continue to receive their payments while their assessment is rearranged.
- No further action is required by any claimant. You will be contacted by DWP if affected.

## **Free TV Licence**

Last year, the BBC announced that only low-income households where one person receives the pension credit benefit will still be eligible for a free licence from June 2020.

The BBC have now announced is to delay TV licence fee changes for the over-75s until August considering the coronavirus situation.

Free TV licences for up to 3.7 million people had been due to be scrapped on 1 June, but that has been put back to 1 August.

## **Job Centre Plus Appointments**

People receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for three 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.

## ***These are the current legislative changes that the government has introduced*** **Scottish Welfare Fund**

The Scottish Government has more than doubled the Scottish Welfare Fund with £45 million additional funding in response to the coronavirus outbreak. The Scottish Welfare Fund pays Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants.

If you live in North Ayrshire, you can check eligibility and apply:

- Online (allow pop-ups in your browser) or
- By telephoning 01294 310001

## **Crisis Grants Eligibility**

A person can apply for a grant to cover:

- Immediate short-term living expenses needed until their next income is due because of an emergency.
- In an emergency where a person is stranded, costs for accommodation in a hostel. In these circumstances the cost must not be covered by other local authority obligations relating to homelessness.
- For travel costs in the case of an emergency
- Living expenses or items where the need for them has arisen because of a disaster.

## **Community Care Grants**

The Regulations require that applicants must be aged 16 or over and be on a low income.

The applicant must be resident in the local authority area, or about to become resident or homeless.

The key test for a Community Care Grant is that the application is for someone setting up or maintaining an established home in the community. There must be some risk that this may not be possible without a grant. That risk does not need to be immediate for an applicant to qualify, and decision makers should use their discretion in deciding what constitutes a 'risk' or 'exceptional pressure'.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/benefits/scottish-welfare-fund.aspx>

**How to make a claim to Universal Credit:**

Please follow the link below for handy tips on making a claim for Universal Credit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jVeWPsCzUI>

**Community Assistance**

We would like to hear from any groups who are organising local support mechanisms for the impact of Coronavirus. We will do all we can to provide relevant practical support. For more information contact 01294 324114 or email [info@northayrshire.community](mailto:info@northayrshire.community).

**Daily updates on community support are available on the Community Planning website at [www.northayrshire.community/covid-19-updates](http://www.northayrshire.community/covid-19-updates)**

Yours faithfully

CCTV and Concierge Service

