

CORONAVIRUS

WE'RE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

As a result of Government instructions, and to preserve our staff and you, our tenants and other customers, our Office is closed to the public however our staff are still working during our normal office hours:

Monday – Thursday – 8.45am to 5.00pm and

Friday – 8.45am to 3.30pm

You can still contact us on (01450) 364200 and listen to our messages to guide you to the correct person you need to speak to. Please be patient to allow your calls to be connected as this may take a little longer than normal. Alternatively, you can email info@waverley-housing.co.uk and we will ensure your email is directed to the appropriate staff member to deal with.

For further information on current services please follow this link www.waverley-housing.co.uk/news-events/coronavirus-were-still-here-for-you/

PAYING YOUR RENT

Waverley Housing agrees with the Scottish Government's position that no one should face eviction as a result of financial hardship caused by the coronavirus outbreak. This is absolutely the right thing to do in order to support people who are struggling financially.

We are very sympathetic to our customers who are either worried about or who have already been affected by the impact of Covid-19. It is crucial that tenants who are able to do so continue to pay their rent. Unlike, homeowners, we are not being offered 'payment holidays' through our banks and lenders. In addition, as local employers we endeavour to continue to fulfil our payment obligations to our contractors as well as our staff.

We would encourage all customers who have concerns about their ability to pay their rent to contact us and discuss these matters through the usual routes. Our trained staff will be able to provide advice and signpost customers to relevant sources of assistance such as social security support and Universal Credit.

We know that these are challenging times for everyone in our communities and we are adapting our services to respond to these circumstances. The national response measures are changing on a daily basis and we are ensuring that we play our part in these efforts. We would encourage all our customers who have concerns about rental payments or other aspects of vulnerability to speak with us so we can understand how we can help.

IF YOUR INCOME IS AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS

Please don't panic if your income is affected by Coronavirus, we will support you through this. Please keep in contact with us, we are still working, although the Office is closed.

If you are being told to stay at home and 'Shield' by the Government, that is what you must do. Please let us know and we will work with you to help you claim any benefits you are entitled to, including support with your rent.

If you are in employment and your employment has been "furloughed", this means it has been put on hold by your employer, you may be entitled to 80% of your wages up to £2,500 per month.

Depending on the level of your income you may also be able to make a claim for Universal Credit.

If your employment has been ceased and you are not classed as "furloughed", you will need to consider making a claim for Universal Credit or New Style Contributions Based Job Seekers Allowance.

Please visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus/ for further information regarding your personal circumstances.

SUPPORT FROM ENERGY COMPANIES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

What support are energy suppliers providing during the Coronavirus outbreak?

The Coronavirus outbreak has caused disruption to many households across Britain, with some people advised not to leave their homes and many more facing financial difficulty as they are unable to work.

On 19 March 2020, the government agreed measures with the energy industry to support vulnerable people and those affected by Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. All UK domestic energy suppliers have signed an industry agreement, setting out measures to ensure these households do not go without an energy supply at this time.

You can get help topping up your prepayment meter if you're self-isolating

Many have been advised to self-isolate during the Coronavirus outbreak, including those with symptoms of the virus as well as some vulnerable groups. If you have a prepayment meter and you're not able to leave the house to top it up, there's extra help available for you.

Your supplier may allow you to nominate someone else to top up your credit. If you need someone else to top up your meter, Ofgem recommends you leave your meter box unlocked.

If you have a prepayment smart meter, you should be able to top up by phone, mobile app or online. If you're not sure how to do this, contact your supplier.

Alternatively, your supplier may add a discretionary fund to your account or send you a pre-loaded top up card so your supply isn't interrupted while you're stuck at home.

If you can't afford to top up your meter because you're financially impacted by Coronavirus, contact your energy supplier immediately and they'll advise you.

You can get energy bill support if you're struggling financially

Under the new measures, households in financial distress will be supported by their energy supplier during the Coronavirus outbreak. This could include debt repayments and bill payments being reassessed, reduced or paused where necessary if you suddenly find yourself with less income as a result of the outbreak. If you find yourself struggling to pay your energy bills or are in debt to your energy provider, contact them to see how they can help.

Your energy supplier won't disconnect your supply

The new measures have been brought in to ensure the most vulnerable people can still have a reliable energy supply in the case of self-isolation. As part of these plans, all energy suppliers have agreed that they will not disconnect any credit meters during the Coronavirus outbreak if households fall behind on payments.

If you're on a prepayment meter, you should be protected against disconnection by following the measures above to ensure your meter is topped up – just contact your supplier if you're struggling.

Find out what help is available by clicking on the link below - www.uswitch.com/gas-electricity

EMERGENCY REPAIRS ONLY

We are currently only carrying out emergency repairs, as defined below:

- No central heating and hot water
- Toilets not working (but only where there is no other toilet in your house)
- Blocked kitchen or bathroom sinks or baths (where no other suitable facility available e.g. shower for washing)
- Loss of water supply
- Electrical safety or loss of electric power
- Security of your home – doors or locks which are not secure
- Major water leaks or flooding from pipes, tanks or cisterns or water leaks from roof
- Gas leaks
- Health & Safety issues: falling debris from a property, e.g. render, rainwater goods, chimney pots
- Bathing facilities, although not an emergency, we will class this as an essential repair. (Please note if your shower is not working but you have a bath, this will be classed as your having adequate bathing facilities so the shower repair will not be an essential repair)
- Smoke/heat/carbon monoxide alarm faults e.g. alarm beeping

For emergency repairs during working hours please telephone 0800 104 105 and out-with working hours please contact our Emergency Standby on 07721 889 618.

If we require to attend an emergency repair, you will be asked some health questions to preserve both your health and that of the trades staff or sub-contractor attending. Your full co-operation in responding is requested. In certain circumstances, we may not be able to carry out even an emergency repair where your health or that of the trades staff or contractor attending may be compromised.

LETTING OUR PROPERTIES

We are currently unable to let any empty properties until further notice. You can however still register an application for housing with us. To register an application go to www.waverley-housing.co.uk/find-a-home/apply-house/

Keep an eye out on our website and as soon as we are able, we will re-introduce lettings again.

STAY SAFE

To prevent the spread of Coronavirus, you should follow Government Guidance:

- If you have had symptoms of coronavirus – which again is a new and persistent cough or a fever – you must isolate yourself for seven days.
- In addition, if you are in a household where someone has symptoms, you must isolate for 14 days.
- For everyone, you must stay at home unless it is absolutely essential to go out, and that includes working from home, wherever possible.
- Stay away from crowded places – even out of doors. And when there are other people around, stay two metres distant from them.
- That advice is for everyone, but it is especially vital if you are over 70, eligible for the flu vaccine, or pregnant.
- And, at all times, follow the advice on washing your hands, using tissues and not touching your face.

More general Covid-19 information (updated daily) is available at www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/



ARE YOU AGED 70 OR OVER OR ARE YOU VULNERABLE DUE TO AN UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITION?

There is general concern in the communities that numbers of elderly people and those with underlying health conditions continue to leave their homes on a regular basis, particularly for food shopping and medical provisions – you simply should not be doing this for your own safety and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There are support groups in place across the Scottish Borders to support and help you with your needs.

Resilient Communities

Resilient Groups are also operating in many local towns and villages. Support varies between Groups but the types of services they can provide include:

- Shopping
- Delivery of medications
- Telephone befriending service
- Dog walking

For information and direct contact details of Resilient Groups operating in your area, click on this link

www.scotborders.gov.uk/community_councils

How do I play my part and volunteer to help in my local community?

If you want to register as a volunteer, please contact your local Resilient Communities Group. They have been working hard to ensure they are available and ready to provide support. If there isn't a group in your area, contact resilientcommunities@scotborders.gov.uk

FIRE SAFETY

With lockdown and so many people now staying within their homes, electrical safety becomes even more important.

1. Fire safety in the home

This Leaflet explains what you can do to minimise the risk of fire in your home. It looks at your landlord's responsibilities of providing smoke alarms and other fire-detection equipment and what you can do if you think your home isn't safe.

How can I keep my home fire safe?

Book a free home fire safety visit

You can request a free home fire safety visit from your local Fire and Rescue Service who will advise you on home fire precautions you can take. Book a home fire safety visit by calling 0800 0731 999 or visit Fire Scotland to book online.

(Please note fire safety visits may be postponed at the present time due to the coronavirus)

Smoke alarm testing

Make sure you test all alarms on a weekly basis and if any are not working, report to your landlord immediately on 0800 104 105. Never disconnect your alarm or move it. If you have a battery-operated smoke alarm never take out the batteries unless it is to replace them with new batteries. Tenants are responsible for replacement batteries, but the landlord is responsible for any faults with your smoke alarms.

Minimise the risks of electrical fires

There are several things you can do to help prevent electrical fires, including:

- unplugging appliances that aren't in use;

- never overloading adaptors with too many plugs;
- getting electrical appliances tested by an approved contractor;
- never leave Christmas tree lights or any other decorative lights on unattended and always switch them off before going out or going to bed;
- be aware of any dangerous electrical wiring and have this attended to immediately.

Paraffin Stoves and Bottled Gas Heaters

Because of the dangers associated with the use and storage of paraffin and bottled gas you must first seek our written permission to use such fuel types in your home.

Be careful with heaters, candles and smoking

- Keep heaters at a safe distance from flammable materials and always unplug electrical heaters when not in use;
- Never cover heaters, for example by draping washing over them;
- Never leave burning candles unattended;
- Never leave matches/lighters where children may find them;
- Never empty a hot ashtray into the bin - wet the contents first or wait until it's completely cold;
- Never smoke in bed.

Chip Pans

Chip pans are one of the most common causes of fires in the home. Please follow this advice:

- Never fill a pan more than one-third full of fat or oil;
- Never leave a pan unattended when the heat is switched on;
- If the pan does catch fire, do not move it and never throw water on it;
- Turn off the heat if it is safe to do so;
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service.

Plan a fire escape route

Plan what you would do if there were a fire in your home and always keep the escape routes clear. Make sure everyone in your home is familiar with the escape plan. If the main exit from your home locks with a key, make sure the key is always easily accessible and everyone in your household knows where it's kept. Keep staircases and means of escape free from rubbish or other items which would obstruct your escape. Your local Fire and Rescue Service will help you produce a fire plan for your home - give them a call to find out more.

2. Do landlords have to provide smoke alarms?

Yes, and new legislation is being introduced from February 2021 after which by law, your landlord has a responsibility for providing the following fire detection equipment for your home:

- at least one smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used;
- at least one smoke alarm in every circulation space, such as hallways and landings;
- at least one heat alarm installed in every kitchen;
- all alarms should be ceiling mounted and mains or lithium battery powered;
- all alarms should be interlinked.

Your landlord also has a general duty to keep your home fit for you to live in and to ensure that it doesn't endanger your health. This includes ensuring there are no fire hazards in your home, such as loose wiring or faulty smoke alarms. Tenants have a duty however to inform their landlord immediately of any such hazards, so that any works, for which the landlord is responsible, can then be undertaken to minimise risks to tenants.

3. Fire safety and furnishings

Any upholstered furnishings you have in your home should be fire resistant.

Upholstered furniture includes:

- sofas and armchairs;
- beds, headboards and mattresses;
- sofa beds and futons;
- nursery and children's furniture;
- loose and stretch covers for furniture;
- cushions and seat pads;
- garden furniture that's used indoors.

There should be a symbol on your furniture to state that it is fire resistant.

4. What should I do in an emergency?

If a fire breaks out in your home:

1. Get everyone out;
2. Stay out;
3. Call the Fire and Rescue Service - dial 999 free from any phone.

Other things to remember:

- If possible, close the door of the room containing the fire, and close all doors behind you as you get out;
- If you need to open a closed door, check to see whether it feels warm first - if it does, there may be fire behind it so don't open it;
- If there's a lot of smoke, stay as low to the ground as you can and cover your nose and mouth with a cloth;
- If you need to break a window to get out, cover the edges with a cloth so you don't cut yourself when you climb out and throw some bedding out to cushion your fall.

STAYING IN THE UK AFTER BREXIT

Staying in the UK after Brexit

You usually need to apply to stay in the UK if you're from:

- a country in the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland
- another country and you have a family member who is from the EU, EEA or Switzerland

The European Economic Area includes European Union countries, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein

Check when you should apply by

It is worth applying to stay in the UK now. After 31 December 2020 you might be asked to prove your right to do things like get a job or use the NHS. You'll be able to do this by showing you have 'pre-settled status' or 'settled status' under the EU Settlement Scheme, or British citizenship.

Getting your status will prove your right to:

- stay in the UK for more than 3 months
- work
- study
- use the NHS
- claim the State Pension

Check what you need to apply for

What you need to apply for depends on how long you've lived in the UK and if you've applied to stay in the UK before.

You should either apply to the EU Settlement Scheme for settled status or for British citizenship.

If you get settled status, you can:

- live and work in the UK for as long as you like
- live outside the UK for up to 5 years in a row without losing your status - 4 years if you're Swiss
- apply for British citizenship 12 months after you get settled status - or straight away if you're married or in a civil partnership with a British citizen
- bring your family to live in the UK
- claiming benefits and get help with housing

You can continue to claim benefits until 31 December 2020.

After that date, some benefits like Universal Credit, Pension Credit and Child Benefit might stop if you don't have settled status. You might not be able to get help with housing.

The rights and status of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens living in the UK will remain the same until 30 June 2021

For further information you can visit

www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/

PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2020/21

ITEM	AMOUNT
Bathrooms	59
Gas Boilers	77
External Doors	61
Kitchens	103
Electrical Inspections	259
Radiators	5
Windows	49
Smoke Alarms	830
Cyclical Painting Programme	300 properties

The start date of the Programme will be delayed as a result of restrictions around COVID-19 and we will keep you updated once we are in a position to commence works.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR

We have recently carried out a procurement exercise to appoint a grounds maintenance contractor to undertake grass cutting, maintenance of shrub beds, hedge cutting and weedkilling on the common ground in 13 feu areas where we act as Factors. The contract to carry out these works will commence on 1/4/20 and run until 31/3/22. We invited three local contractors to submit tenders and after evaluating the tender submissions received we have selected the most economically advantageous tender which was submitted by Graham Fleming who currently provides this service.

Whilst Government advice is that people should only be travelling to undertake essential work we will need to suspend grounds maintenance works until we get Government advice that works such as grounds maintenance can resume.

UPPER LANGLEE

We are pleased to report that our appointed contractors Everwarm have started on a major refurbishment programme of works to 68 flats in the estate and will complete the programme later this year. These works include the provision of new render and external wall insulation to the blocks of flats, new cavity wall insulation, roof works, replacement rainwater goods, new communal door entry systems to most blocks, new flooring in the common stairwells and full redecoration of these stairwells. We recognise that there will be a degree of inconvenience for residents whilst these works are carried out but we hope that the increased energy efficiency and improved look to the properties will make this worthwhile. This represents the first stage of our estate regeneration plans and we are currently working on a planning application submission to Scottish Borders Council for the proposed demolition and new build works to be carried out as the next stage of these plans. In conjunction with this we are also close to appointing an employers agent who will act on behalf of Waverley Housing in progressing the demolition and new build plans.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

One in four people in the UK are affected by mental health problems each year. Surprisingly common, isn't it? Yet despite these figures, people are still made to feel isolated and ashamed about their mental health. Awareness has come on leaps and bounds in recent years but unfortunately there is still some work to do to get a better and fairer understanding of what people experience.

Mental health is something we all have. It's made up of our emotional, social and psychological wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and behave. Looking after our mental health is just as important as looking after our physical health.

So why is there so much stigma attached to mental health?

There are many myths and misconceptions about mental health. One of the most common is the perception that people who have a mental illness are weak. This is not true. In fact, it takes a lot of strength to go through a mental illness and recover, and weakness does not form any part of that.

Another myth is that people with mental health conditions are dangerous. There isn't always an automatic link between mental health and violent behaviour, and the proportion of people living with mental illness who commit violent crime is surprisingly small. You'll find that people with mental health problems can be the most empathetic and caring people you could meet, because they know exactly what it feels like to be sad and they don't want other people to feel that way.

So, what can we do to help reduce stigma?

One of the ways we can help break the stigma is by talking and listening. Talking to someone who is suffering with their mental health can make a huge difference to their recovery and allowing them to talk about how they feel could even possibly save their life. It's important to remember that you are not alone and that there is always someone willing to listen.

If you or someone you know is suffering with their mental health then there is support out there, please don't suffer in silence. There are people willing to listen, and there are organisations out there that can help you. For further information and advice as to what help is available in the Scottish Borders please go to www.scotborders.gov.uk/mental_health

If you need urgent help?

If your mental or emotional state quickly gets worse, or you're worried about someone you know - help is available, you can contact The Samaritans offer emotional support on 116 123 it's free from any phone or 0330 094 5717 local charges will apply.

In an emergency call 999 for immediate assistance

MINDFULNESS

In these challenging times why not try some mindfulness meditation to help you relax and reduce stress levels. This can help bring you and your thoughts into the present, focusing on emotions, thoughts, and sensations that you're experiencing "in the now."

While it can be initially difficult to quiet your thoughts, with time and practice you can experience the benefits of mindfulness meditation. Get your spouse, partner or even your whole family together and try some mindfulness meditation.

Go on - look at the NHS website (link below for further information on the benefits of mindfulness and try out a mediation session

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/

IS THE DATA WE HOLD ABOUT YOU UP-TO-DATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)?

We have collected from you, as our tenant, some personal data. It is however your responsibility to ensure that this data is kept up-to-date. If you think you may have changed any data since we initially got this from you, please let us know. It is essential, for instance, we have your correct contact numbers so that we can contact you easily, when required. People change their mobile numbers but forget to tell us! Have your household details changed? – has anyone been added to your household or has anyone left. Please have a think about any changes which you think we need to know about and let us know. A telephone call or email will do to make sure the records we hold are accurate. T: (01450 364200) or email: info@waverley-housing.co.uk
Thank you for your co-operation.



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