

ADVICE AND UPDATES FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

We know that everyone is affected by coronavirus and many people have lost work and income, are ill or are scared. At CDS, we want to help as much as we can. This leaflet gives you some **information** to help you look after yourself and to let you know what help we can offer.

WHAT ARE WE DOING AT CDS?

Our priority is to keep people safe and to keep essential services running. In line with government advice, our staff are now working remotely but continue to provide service for our customers. Our Hub building on the Phoenix Estate is not open to the public at this time. You will find some specific information for Phoenix residents at the end of this newsletter.

Please use email or the phone to contact us as our office is not open and will not receive post. For the most up to date information about our service, please use our website at www.cds.coop

HOW WE ARE WORKING

Like most of the UK, our teams are working from home. The national broadband and phone networks are under huge pressure so if you have problems getting through to us, this will be why. It is easiest to contact us by email at **talktous@cds.coop**. If you are unable to email, you can call members of the team directly by using their designated mobile number. These are published on our website under 'Our People' – just scroll to the bottom of that page. You can also still use our normal office numbers which are being diverted.

We have changed our office hours so that we are open from 9am to 5pm and our out of hours service will pick up calls outside of this time

LOOKING AFTER OUR MOST VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

We will be trying to make personal contact with all our older and more vulnerable customers over the coming weeks. If you are on your own, are self-isolating and need help or feel scared or unable to cope with what is happening, please do contact us so we can try to help.

The best way to make contact is via our **talktous@cds.coop** email address – but if you prefer to call, use 03333 21 30 30.

REPAIRS

As we are now in a 'lockdown' situation, we are moving to an 'emergency and urgent only' repairs service. **Please help us by only contacting us for immediately essential repairs until the health crisis is over.** This will help others to get critical work done quickly. We will keep you updated on our service status through our website and email or text messages where we have your details.

If you have a routine repair booked in, we will call you to cancel this and will ask you to call again when the situation improves to book in a new repair. Please do not call for non-essential repairs as we cannot book repairs into the future with any certainty at this time. Obviously, if any repair issue becomes urgent or an emergency arises, contact us straight away.

Where you have an urgent or emergency repair, you can expect our staff and our contractors to ask you a few questions before they come into your home for a repair. Staff will use personal protective clothing such as gloves and masks to protect themselves and you. They may ask you to move into another room whilst work is undertaken, and they will not ask you to sign for any work. If you or someone in your home is ill or is self-isolating, we will only carry out emergency repairs.

Emergency repairs are things that put you or your home at immediate and serious risk. It includes things like a total loss of heat or power or the failure of your only WC or something that makes your home immediately insecure – like a front door that doesn't close.

It is important to remember that this situation is changing very quickly. We will make every effort to get emergency repairs undertaken so that your home is safe. If this proves impossible, we will work with you to find a solution that allows you and your family to be safe.

CARETAKING & CLEANING

We will aim to provide a basic caretaking/cleaning service where this complies with the current emergency advice. Our staff and contractors will be social distancing and may be wearing protective clothing. They have been instructed not to speak with you or come within 2metres of you. **Please do not try to speak to caretaking or cleaning staff as you may put yourself or them at risk.** If you need to contact us about a problem, please report it through talktous@cds.coop.

FIRE & GAS SAFETY ISSUES

We will be carrying out some safety inspections inline with the new guidance. Our staff and contractors will be social distancing and may be wearing protective clothing. They have been instructed not to speak with you or to come within 2 metres of you. **Please do not try to speak to staff or contractors as you may put yourself or them at risk.**

It is particularly important that you keep areas 'fire safe' – clear from any personal items or rubbish – at this time. We are asking the HSE to clarify the gas safety requirements. If you do have a service visit booked or due we will be in touch. If you are self-isolating or someone in your home is ill, please let us know straight away so we can talk with you about how to get this done safely.

PAYING YOUR RENT & SERVICE CHARGE

We know that many residents are worried that they will struggle to pay their rent and service charges if their income is affected by coronavirus. This might be because you get ill yourself or have to self-isolate or care for someone who is ill – or because your employer reduces your hours, or you lose your job suddenly. We really understand how stressful this is – and how little control anyone has at this time – and we want to provide reassurance.

Will I lose my Home?

Firstly, we want you to know that **no-one will be evicted from their home** if they cannot pay because of coronavirus – whether you are directly or indirectly affected. We welcome the Government action to change the law around evictions during this period and we will work with you to make sure that you can meet your rent payments using the help that is available to you and to your employer.

Talk to Us!

The single most important thing that you can do if you are worried about paying the rent or service charges is to **get it touch with us at the earliest opportunity**. We really want to help – and we can – but only if we know that you are experiencing a problem. Please trust us to help you and give us a call on 03333 21 30 30 or send an email to **talktous@cds.coop** and we will make contact.

The government has now offered help to employers to keep staff on (the 'coronavirus job retention scheme') with the government meeting part of the costs of wages. This should help more people to stay in work and you can find more information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RENTS & SERVICE CHARGES

I am going to struggle to pay my rent as my income is down because of coronavirus. What can I do?

Please talk to us straight away if you are facing a problem – we know that this is outside your control and we want to help. You will not lose your home and our team will signpost you to financial help through the welfare benefits system.

Payments are available more quickly and easily because of the current crisis and if you are already claiming help, you may be entitled to more assistance. You can contact us on talktous@cds.coop or call us on 03333 21 30 30.

I am already receiving benefits but I can't attend reassessment. What will happen?

Special arrangements will be in place for people in receipt of benefits who cannot attend reassessments or jobcentre appointments because they are required to stay at home or are infected by coronavirus. There is more information available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-support-for-employees-benefit-claimants-and-businesses>

I am now in arrears because of coronavirus. Will you evict me or start proceedings to take my home?

No. Nobody will lose their home because they have been unable to pay due to coronavirus. The government has given protection from eviction to tenants during this crisis. You can find more information about this here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/complete-ban-on-evictions-and-additional-protection-for-renters>

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

I understand you are only doing emergency and urgent repairs. What does this cover?

Emergency repairs are those which if not completed, could put you or someone else at serious risk or which could seriously damage the building. Urgent repairs are usually things that if not completed will lead to an emergency.

Examples of emergency repairs would include loss of all heating or hot water; loss of electrical supply; unsafe electrical fittings or repeatedly fusing lights/circuits; Immediate security issues – such as front doors not closing; loss of use of your only WC; unsafe stairs or handrails.

This is not a complete list and we assess each repair individually to determine whether it is an emergency, urgent or routine. If your repair is routine, we will take all the details from you and schedule it once services are resumed.

I have a repair or gas service booked for my home but I am worried your engineer may infect me. What should I do?

Please talk to us. It is important that safety issues are dealt with although non urgent work will be rescheduled. The engineers who attend will not have symptoms and will not have been asked to self-isolate. They will follow government guidelines for social distancing when in your home.

I have suspected or confirmed coronavirus/COVID-19. Will you still do my repair?

We will only come into your home in an emergency situation and will need to put special measures in place to protect our engineers. We will do everything we can to make sure that the emergency situation is made safe. If this proves impossible we will work with you to find a solution that makes sure you and your family are safe. Please let us know immediately if you have an appointment and you are suspect or confirmed to have the viral infection.

MOVING HOME

I am due to move out of my home. Can this still go ahead?

We will do everything we can to help your move to go ahead. Please contact us to discuss how we can assist.

Can I still end my tenancy with you?

Yes. You can let us know that you want to end your tenancy by sending us an email to talktous@cds.coop. Please don't send us a letter just now as our offices may not be open.

OUR SERVICE

I am trying to reach CDS but the line keeps cutting off. How can I contact you?

With more people than ever before working at home, the phone network is busier than usual. The best way to get in touch with us is by email to talktous@cds.coop or directly to the member of staff if you have dealt with them before. Details of direct numbers are on our website under the 'Our People' section.

We are experiencing anti social behaviour. Will you still deal with this?

We will continue to try to deal with all housing management issues but some practical restrictions – such as not being able to visit – may mean that this takes longer than usual. Please bear with us during this time.

I have received a letter from my Doctor telling me I am at risk and should self-isolate for 12 weeks. What should I do?

You should follow your doctor's advice and minimise all contact for the next 12 weeks. If you are worried about how you will manage, feel free to contact us and we will try to connect you with local services that can help. If you need any emergency repairs, we will manage these carefully so that we do not put you at risk. Just let us know about your self-isolation when you contact us.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PHOENIX ESTATE RESIDENTS

NEW STAFF MEMBER DEDICATED TO PHOENIX

Dave Brand has joined us as the newest member of the CDS team. In the new role of “Safe & Satisfied” Project Manager, he is dedicated to ensuring all residents living at Phoenix feel connected, happy and safe living in their community and supporting a positive relationship with us at CDS. Dave will be based at the Phoenix hub building and is looking forward to getting to know the community and its residents when these current restrictions are over. He would be happy to meet by phone or over email during the lockdown. Vivien continues to be the Housing Officer and will lead on all tenancy issues although Dave is happy to support Vivien by signposting to the right help and advice where needed.

You can reach Vivien and Dave directly on

Vivien Okonkwo 07818 017823

Dave Brand 07818 017818

HERE WHEN YOU NEED US

One key element of Dave’s work is getting to know more about residents so that our overall services can better meet your needs. Dave won’t do everything but he will make everything work more smoothly! If you have questions or need help - whether during this period of ‘lockdown’ or at any other time - please contact him. If you have any particular needs or want to know how to connect to other services or how to get food or pharmacy support or just to have a chat because you are self isolating/quarantined—give us a call.

HELPING OUR COMMUNITY

We have partnered the Dartford Foodbank to help them buy more food in preparation for the additional households who may need help. We will be working with them to assess how people on the estate can get to the help that they need during the lockdown. You can reach the foodbank team directly on 01322 225850 or give Dave a call.

GENERAL HEALTH INFORMATION

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS?

Coronavirus causes a new illness called COVID-19. This causes problems with THE lungs and airways.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The usual symptoms include a high fever and a new continuous dry cough. If you have these symptoms you should stay at home. Use the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> for more information if you have symptoms.

Most people who get Coronavirus will not be very ill. Some older people or people who already have health problems may become more ill. You may feel worried about Coronavirus. This is normal. Talk about how you feel with people you can trust.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS?

Stay home and stay safe! The new guidance means you should stay in your home unless you need to get food, medical supplies/assistance, take daily exercise or attend essential work.

The advice from Public Health England is advising everyone to ensure good general hygiene and practice 'social distancing' whenever they are with people outside of their family (eg. On the street or in a shop or pharmacy)

Good General Hygiene

Keep your hands clean. Wash your hands lots of times during the day: use soap and water use hand sanitiser (gel) if there is no soap and water when you are out making sure you wash your hands when

- ⇒ you come home or visit other places
- ⇒ before you touch food
- ⇒ Carry tissues and use them to catch coughs/sneezes, bin the tissue, wash your hands
- ⇒ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth and face with unwashed hands
- ⇒ Avoid close contact with people who are unwell

Social Distancing

In addition to the general measures above this means you should:

- ⇒ Stay home
- ⇒ Work from home unless this is impossible
- ⇒ Avoid gathering with others
- ⇒ If you are out or have to work near others, stay at least 2 metres away
- ⇒ Use the phone or go on-line to contact your GP or other medical/care teams

These measures are particularly important for those over 70yrs, pregnant or with underlying health conditions.