



WELCOME TO THIS SPRING SAFETY EDITION OF YOUR CUSTOMER NEWSLETTER WORD ON THE STREET

A message from Neil Tryner, Managing Director

I hope you and your families are keeping safe and well and my heart goes out to anyone who has lost a loved one or suffered illness during this time.

Life has certainly changed for all of us throughout the past few months and we've all had to adapt to new routines and unfamiliar ways of doing things, like home schooling, home working and social distancing. I want to reassure you that although all of us at Co-op Homes are working differently during this time, we're supporting each other and our residents remotely and are still here to help with rent, tenancy and housing support. We're also staying in regular contact with our customers and Management Committee members and despite the challenges we're all facing, it's been great to see the different ways in which communities are coming together. We've seen lots of examples of helping elderly and vulnerable neighbours, increased contact with people in the wider community and a real sense of looking out for each other, which is the heartbeat of co-operative living – may it continue as we move towards a new way of life.

We really want to get things right so please don't hesitate to give us feedback, comments or complaints as we use these to shape our services for all our residents and client co-ops. You can share your views by emailing customer.services@coophomes.coop or contacting us via www.coophomes.coop.

Your safety is important to us and we have this in mind with every action we take:

- ▶ Our offices at Teddington and at our co-ops are closed and our team are currently working from home. This will be reviewed on a month by month basis.
- ▶ We have secure access to the records and systems we need

to manage your tenancies and our services to co-ops.

- ▶ We also have a brand-new remote telephone system that allows us to take your calls as if we were still in the office.
- ▶ We've learnt that we can function as an organisation and still meet your expectations - albeit with a modified approach – online meetings and papers have become the new normal, replacing face to face meetings and hard copies of papers. It may be that you want this to continue when restrictions are lifted.
- ▶ We'll carry out a cost and efficiency analysis and share the results and outcomes when we can.

As you know our top priority during the COVID-19 crisis has been to help keep you, our teams and our contractors safe while continuing to deliver important services to you as best we can. To help guide us all through this period as safely as possible we have been following the advice of the Government and Public Health England closely and following the latest guidance, we can confirm:

- ▶ We will continue to attend to all emergency repairs (where the repairs service is part of our management agreement).
- ▶ As soon as we can, and depending upon the availability of ours and our co-ops' preferred contractors, we'll be gradually increasing the range of repairs we can provide, and will work with our contractors to identify which ones are ready to provide more services safely.
- ▶ We'll be communicating with each of our co-ops separately as services may differ depending on the contractors used and the management services we provide.

- ▶ If we provide this service for you, we ask that you please phone us to request a repair rather than using our online appointment system, Fixflo, so we can reinforce safety measures and let you know whether your request will be possible.
- ▶ If you or anyone in your household have symptoms of Coronavirus or if you're self-isolating, please let us know at the time of requesting a repair.
- ▶ Our teams are still here to help. You can call [0203 166 2608](tel:02031662608) or email customer.services@coophomes.coop.

- ▶ If you have any concerns about your rent, please get in touch and we'll talk you through any support we can offer.
- ▶ We will continue to look for ways to support our most vulnerable customers.
- ▶ We'll continue to listen carefully to Government advice and keep you updated as and when anything changes.
- ▶ Please keep an eye on our website www.coophomes.coop for the latest updates.



EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Where Co-op Homes provides this service, to report an emergency, please do not use Fixflo. Instead, please call [020 3166 2608](tel:02031662608).

Emergencies include:

- ▶ complete loss of water or burst pipes
- ▶ complete loss of electricity (not related to no fuel credit)
- ▶ unsafe electrical outlets, e.g. sockets
- ▶ breaches of security to outside doors or windows
- ▶ complete loss of gas supply or gas leak (if you suspect a gas leak, turn off the gas at the meter immediately and call National Grid on [0800 111 999](tel:0800111999))
- ▶ blocked main drains, blocked soil pipe or blocked (sole) WC
- ▶ loss of heating or loss of hot water for elderly/vulnerable tenants between 31 October and 1 May
- ▶ offensive or racist graffiti
- ▶ major structural defects.

There are a couple of additional safety issues we want to tell you about and ask for your co-operation:

Gas safety

We're continuing with gas checks as normal during this time (where this is a service that Co-op Homes manages for you). Keeping your home safe is a top priority for us, and an annual gas safety check is a legal requirement. If this check isn't carried out, you could be putting yourself and your family in danger.

When they come to your home, our gas engineers will follow social distancing guidelines and wear PPE. However, if you or someone in your house is unwell, self-isolating or shielding, please email customer.services@coophomes.coop or call [020 3166 2608](tel:02031662608) and we will postpone any upcoming gas checks.

If you have a carbon monoxide detector, make sure you test it regularly. If you don't have one and your gas service is overdue or will become due in the next couple of months, please let us know.

Fire safety

Although we've been unable to carry out as many general inspections of communal areas as we normally would, our fire risk assessments have been taking place as normal (if these are services Co-op Homes carries out for you).

It's residents' responsibility to keep communal areas clear. Items that shouldn't be left in communal areas include:

- ▶ bikes
- ▶ buggies
- ▶ prams
- ▶ mobility scooters
- ▶ children's toys
- ▶ large plant pots
- ▶ rubbish you're waiting to throw away.

Leaving clutter in communal areas can block emergency exit routes and prevent the emergency services from carrying out their duties, and if items are set alight, they give off toxic smoke and gas which might reduce your visibility. They could also explode or cause the fire to spread more quickly.

If you have any large or bulky items of household waste, you can arrange for them to be removed through your local council.



PAYING YOUR RENT (if Co-op homes collects your rent)

We understand the impact coronavirus may have on your household finances and how concerning it is. If you think you're going to be late with your rent payment, please let us know so we can agree to give you some extra time to get back on your feet. You can contact us at [020 3166 2608](tel:02031662608) or customer.services@coophomes.coop.

Co-op Homes will not be freezing rents but if you're struggling with your income, we can freeze action on arrears for a maximum of up to four weeks to give you time to review your options and make the necessary applications for benefit support. However, you'll need you to let us know and keep us updated with any benefit claims you've made.

If your income has dropped, it's worth checking what benefits you may be eligible for, and whether you can help get help such as a reduction on your council tax bill. Visit www.gov.uk for more information on available benefits or call [020 3166 2608](tel:02031662608) or email customer.services@coophomes.coop and we'll let you know what help is available.

Many of you will have received rent increase letters earlier in the year. If you are claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit you must send the copy of the letter to the relevant department to ensure that your benefit is adjusted to match the increased rent you are responsible for as failure to do so will mean that your rent account will start to accrue arrears. If you are unsure about what to do, please don't hesitate to give your housing officer a call on [020 3166 2608](tel:02031662608).



WORDSEARCH

Y	A	T	S	A	F	R	J	S	D	L	Z	Y	A	D
W	L	E	P	V	L	E	Q	I	V	A	Q	C	S	L
A	D	P	C	P	Z	A	S	K	A	I	G	N	B	F
M	P	N	M	L	C	T	R	D	X	C	B	E	E	T
D	C	R	R	M	A	R	I	M	P	O	V	G	S	V
C	O	R	O	N	A	V	I	R	U	S	L	R	T	F
J	K	G	C	T	O	S	I	T	R	B	E	E	O	I
B	H	I	N	C	E	O	A	I	N	A	G	M	S	R
L	N	T	P	I	R	C	S	G	X	A	I	E	H	E
G	N	E	L	I	D	K	T	O	A	S	O	O	U	M
B	N	B	T	A	I	L	Y	I	A	M	N	R	E	P
A	F	Y	D	F	E	V	E	F	O	F	E	W	N	F
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Finally, for a bit of light relief – why not try our health and safety wordsearch?

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| ALARM | COVID | ESSENTIAL | LEGIONELLA | SAFETY |
| ALERT | DISTANCING | FIRE | PRIORITY | SHIELDING |
| ASBESTOS | ELECTRICS | GAS | PROTECTION | SOCIAL |
| CORONAVIRUS | EMERGENCY | HEALTH | RISK | STAY |