

6th May 2020

Dear tenant

### **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**

Following on from our last letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, I am writing to provide an update on our current COVID-19 situation and must stress that even before this letter reaches you, we have to anticipate that the UK Government and Scottish Government may have issued more guidance and advice. We anticipate more advice coming out over the next few weeks. We continue to update the website and social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, for information but we know that many of our tenants remain without internet, so this letter should provide an overall update on our activities.

You should continue to observe the guidance to remain at home except for essential shopping/prescriptions, wash your hands regularly, to social distance from wider family members and friends, and only exercise locally and once per day. Unless the guidance changes. If you are unwell you should phone NHS 111 for advice – remember to self-isolate if you or a member of your family have a fever, and/or a continuous cough.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY**

Our office remains **CLOSED** to the public. We are only visiting once per week to deal with the incoming mail. However, we have started to plan for how services can be resumed when Government guidance allows us to do so. Even when the office does re-open, this will still however mean we can only provide a limited service and many staff will have to continue with remote working. This is because we cannot accommodate all staff back in the office safely to ensure we adhere to the 2m social distancing and other guidance we will receive. We plan to install screens in the Reception area and interview rooms to protect our customers and our staff. Given services have reduced, we have furloughed some staff through the Government's Job Retention Scheme and continue to monitor workload. Staff are still available remotely so please continue to contact us on 0141 881 0638.

At this time, we remain on a service for **emergency repairs only** and will maintain a list of backlog repairs that will need to be actioned when normal service resumes. We thank you for your patience and acknowledge that both tenants and contractors need to ensure that for normal service to resume, it must be carried out safely. All guidance will be reviewed to ensure this will be possible.

For **gas servicing**, this service is **operational** and where it is safe to do so and our contractors will be able to access your property to carry out boiler servicing and emergency repairs – please continue to work with us to allow access where you and your immediate family are no longer self-isolating.

All our cyclical and planned works have been **suspended** with the exception of close cleaning and landscape maintenance. As soon as it is judged safe to do so, planned works will only then be re-started and this includes our fire safety, gutter cleaning, painter-work, replacement boilers, and bathroom programmes.

If you require assistance with rent payments and Universal Credit please continue to speak with our staff. If you send a cheque to the office, we will be able to bank it. Similarly we can arrange for cheque refunds but all cheques need two signatories, which will mean it may take longer than usual to deal with.

Anti-social complaints – while we can still deal with these remotely, our ability is limited to what we can do over the phone and by email, however please to report issues to staff.

Complaints – these are also still be processed but again remotely. Some may take longer to complete depending on issues and circumstances but you will be kept informed.

### **CONTACT WITH TENANTS**

We have sent out a text message and/or email for any tenant that we have contact details for. We have also been telephoning round a number of tenants but have not been able to speak with everyone. If you need our assistance and support, please do get in touch.

### **SHELTERED HOUSING COMPLEX**

Our daily warden call service continues remotely by our Housing Support Assistant across 7 days per week. A weekly fire alarm test will take place on a Monday morning around 10.30am. Residents have been told not to use the common room but the laundry room is still available on a rota basis. We will be looking to do further work to the common areas to allow a separate access to the laundry room as we believe the common lounge may be out of commission for many months to come based on government guidelines. This will be necessary as a result of ensuring social distancing while the coronavirus is still active and therefore to ensure both residents and our staff member remain safe. We will only be able to consider activities that are provided remotely and we would ask residents to ensure they stay 2m apart from neighbours at all times including when using the back court – please keep conversations to less than 15 minutes.

### **COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS**

There is a tremendous amount of community work ongoing in the area across East Renfrewshire – those tenants shielding will have received a phone call. However further advice and support is available through the Community Hub at Voluntary Action-East Renfrewshire – you will be signposted to what is available including food shopping, prescriptions, etc.

Community Hub phone number is 0141 876 9555 or email [hello@va-er.org.uk](mailto:hello@va-er.org.uk)

Opening hours, Monday – Friday 10am to 3pm. More information is included within this letter.

### **FUEL VOUCHERS**

We have been able to access funding from the Scottish Government, for fuel vouchers for those in need, so please contact the VA-ER Community Hub if you require assistance with fuel costs. We will co-ordinate a response to this. More information is contained within this newsletter from Home Energy Scotland but please contact staff if you need assistance with fuel vouchers.

### **COMMUNITY HARDSHIP FUND**

This fund is still open for all tenants. Should you have a particular need for support, then you can apply to us for a one-off grant of #250. This could be for a range of issues and given the current situation, we will consider a wider need for assistance. Please contact the office.

### **GOVERNING BOARD/GOVERNANCE**

Our Governing Board is now meeting remotely using video conferencing and this arrangement needs to continue for the foreseeable future. They are to continue to meet on an emergency basis and are being kept up-to-date with operational reports on service delivery. We are also required to complete

a monthly report to the Scottish Housing Regulator on staff absence/furlough; cash position; arrears and lettings; void management.

Our chairperson, David McCready sends this message to you:

‘We thank our customers for their co-operation during this very difficult time. The organisation remains financially strong and committed to working through this crisis with our customers and the wider community of East Renfrewshire. We understand the strain this current covid-19 crisis has on our customers and their families. We know that customers have been directly affected by covid-19 and we offer our condolences to family members at this difficult time. We ask all our customers to continue to work together and follow Government guidelines to defeat the coronavirus. Our governing Board will review our position when we are aware of all the implications the crisis has had on service delivery and impact on customers. Please stay safe meantime and contact staff if you require assistance.’

We will keep tenants informed. In the meantime, please stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Shirley A Robison  
Chief Executive  
Barrhead Housing Group