



*1986-2016: Celebrating 30 years working in the community*  
4<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Dear tenant**

### **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**

Following on from our last letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> May 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 Scottish Government may have issued more guidance and advice.

As part of the Scottish Government's route map out of lockdown, it is anticipated that our office re-opening will be part of Phase 3. While there is no date for this, we anticipate this will not be until possibly early August 2020. We are continuing to review how we will open safely and how we will operate the office when open – there will be restrictions to office opening hours and how we have customers attending the office which is likely to be restricted and limited to **appointment only**.

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 Scottish Government's guidance as we ease out of lockdown. Please continue to observe strict hand hygiene, guidance on meeting up with friends and one other household and the 2m social distancing. If you are unwell you should phone NHS 111 for advice – remember to self-isolate if you (7 days) or a member of your family (14 days) have COVID symptoms. These symptoms have been changed so please refer to new guidance.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY**

Our office remains **CLOSED** to the public. We are only visiting once per week to deal with the incoming mail.

Staff are available remotely and some staff are not working as they are on the Government's job retention scheme, called furlough. However, there are other staff available to answer your queries. Please continue to call our main number – 0141 881 0638 – and your call will be answered by a member of staff.

At this time, we remain on a service for **emergency repairs only** with our main contractor Turners. Meantime we will continue to 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. Please note our single term repairs contract is currently being re-tendered and a report on the tenders will be made to our Governing Board at the end of June 2020. We will update you on the outcome of this tender process.



For properties now **void** and properties being terminated, we are working with contractors to have these cleared, repaired and re-let. We are now also having to review how we allocate our properties using safe distancing and work on this is underway.

For **gas servicing**, this service is **operational** following safety guidelines and our contractor 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 and especially where your service is now overdue.

Some of our other maintenance contracts are now being reviewed as part of Phase 1 of the Scottish Government's route out of lockdown. While close cleaning and landscape maintenance has continued throughout the crisis, we are now looking at the safe return of other contracts including outside painter-work, and more importantly our fire safety contract for the fitting of smoke alarms – these may not be able to re-commence until late June at the earliest.

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 but we prefer you to use other payment methods including Callpay/Allpay, standing orders, and direct debits. If we are to arrange a cheque refund, we need cheques signed by two signatories, which will mean it may take longer than usual to deal with. We will want to move to online banking for all, so you will be asked to make changes as we go forward.

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 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.

### **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 Wednesday afternoon. Residents have been told not to use the common room which has now been blocked off. Access to the laundry room is still available on a rota basis. Tenants must maintain a 2m distance from neighbours, and keep conversations to less than 15 minutes and preferably outside if possible.

We will be looking to do further work to the outside car parking areas to continue the improvements that were started before lockdown. To ensure safe working practices, this will take several weeks to plan for a safe return.

### **COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS/SHIELDING**

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 deliveries, 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.

Shielding Tenants – there is also a co-ordinated partnership approach to getting digital access and support to tenants currently shielding – this is being co-ordinated by East Renfrewshire Council. If you fall into this category and need assistance, please contact the Association in the first instance.

## **FUEL VOUCHERS**

If you are struggling with fuel bills, please contact our Welfare Rights Officer Vivien Betteridge. Vivien will make a referral on your behalf to the Citizens Advice Bureau for access to 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 up to £250. This could be for a range of issues including employment preparations, clothes, furniture, etc. Please note that tenants will be referred to other funds where these are available locally. These other funds include the foodbank; a referral to the CAB where you are experiencing difficulties paying your utility bills; Voluntary Action who can help with funding to allow you to continue online internet services. It is important that you provide us with specific details of what the grant will be used for and exact costs where possible. The form is available to download on our website, otherwise please contact the office where we can post an application form out to you.

## **COMMUNITY REGENERATION PROJECTS**

### Climate Challenge Fund

We were successful earlier in the year for funding for cooking workshops, furniture upcycling and recycling and the continuation of the food share project at Dunterlie. But the current coronavirus situation has meant that this project has had to be reviewed. We are now currently working through how we can move forward on this project with the cooking workshops and more information will be available soon on our website.

### National Lottery Project

We have also now been successful in securing funding to expand our DIY Dunterlie project to other areas but given the coronavirus crisis, have had to re-shape this project. We will provide further details on how this will go forward on our website and in future correspondence to tenants.

### Digital online workshops

Unfortunately this project is currently on hold due to staff being furloughed. We will be looking at ways to re-start this project as soon as we can.

### Supporting Communities Fund

As a community anchor organisation, Barrhead HA has been able to access funding to support local community groups and over £30,000 has now been issued to support local groups – information is on our website. In addition, funding has been received for fuel vouchers as stated above. We have also been able to issue a weekly meal with recipes to 30 sheltered housing tenants as part of a pilot for 8 weeks.

## **GOVERNING BOARD/GOVERNANCE**

Our Governing Board is now meeting remotely using video conferencing and this arrangement needs to continue for the foreseeable future. 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive  
Barrhead Housing Group