



*1986-2016: Celebrating 30 years working in the community*

20th August 2020

**Dear tenant**

## **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**

Following on from our last letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020, and our Summer Newsletter issued in late July 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 4. While there is no date for this, we anticipate this will not be until mid-late September 2020. The next Scottish Government announcement is expected on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020. However, we are increasing our presence of staff in our office as we test out the new work arrangements.

When the office does open it will be restricted and limited to appointment only. All visitors will be required to wear a face covering when entering the building and we have hand sanitisers available in Reception. We will restrict access in Reception and aim to maintain 2m distance.

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 social distancing, face coverings, and meeting up with friends and family, maintain 2m social distancing where possible. If you are unwell you should phone NHS 111 for advice – remember to self-isolate if you (10 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**

**For now, our office remains CLOSED to the public.** Staff are available and working in the office in cohort teams but this is restricted to testing our new safety procedures with homeworking still in place. When we re-open, visitors will be required to wear a face covering.

Staff are available and all are now back at work. Please continue to call our main number – 0141 881 0638 – and your call will be answered by a member of staff.



As we have now moved to our new repairs contract, Everwarm, we are working through the backlog of repairs and as we have said, we need to ensure that services being resumed are carried out safely. You must continue to work with us and alert us to anyone in your household that is unwell. We note that shielding restrictions have been lifted and we will work with tenants to ensure internal repairs and new works are carried out safely.

For properties now **void** and properties being terminated, we are working with Everwarm 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. We must get into your property to carry out this service. So far, we have not capped any service due to the current COVID situation but if you choose to ignore our communications we will consider other measures to ensure your property and neighbouring properties are safe.

Contracts now underway include - close cleaning, landscape maintenance, painter-work, fitting of smoke alarms, and we are planning for the commencement of our bathroom contract. We are required to have all the new smoke alarms fitted by February 2021, so please work with us to provide access.

If you require assistance with **rent payments** and applying for benefits such as 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 would 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 – we continue to deal with a range of issues and can deal with these remotely, however, in some cases 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 5 days per week and we are working hard to put systems in place so that we can resume on-site services. This is likely to be mid to late September. A weekly fire alarm test will take place on a Monday 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.

Further work to the outside pathways at the car parking area have restarted and been completed. A further phase of improvement works to the car park and to the common lounge, kitchen and laundry area will be scheduled to start over the next 2 months. All contractors have provided revised Health and Safety information to ensure safe working practices.

### **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.

### **MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS**

Our funding for this year has now been confirmed, so if you need assistance with adaptations within your home please contact our Janice Peters, Property Services Manager.

### **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 as an online form via our website, otherwise please contact the office where we can post an application form out to you.

### **COMMUNITY REGENERATION PROJECTS**

#### Climate Challenge Fund

Our new project co-ordinator, Laurie Duffy has now started with us and works part-time. She will be progressing online workshops for cooking, furniture upcycling and re-cycling 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 – please see our website for the most up-to-date information on what is available.

#### 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 COVID-19. We are now however secured funding to consider a dedicated part-time staff member to directly help tenants with online activities. We hope to have a service up and running later this year.

### **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

Shirley Robison  
Chief Executive  
Barrhead Housing Group