

horizon news

newsletter for tenants



Coronavirus – we're here to help

As I write, we are nearing the end of 2 weeks in 'lock down', a situation which has significantly affected us all and changed the way we live our daily lives.

At Horizon we are all very aware of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our families, friends, neighbours, wider communities and on our staff. There are so many things to deal with, the worry for many about their health and well-being and of course, the worry for many about a much reduced and limited household income.

It's important for you to know that we understand this and are here to help. If you have any concerns, please get in touch so that we can talk to you about your situation. A key priority for us in the coming months is to make sure that if you're struggling to pay your rent due to this crisis you let us know immediately. We need your help to allow us to help you.

So, please speak to us, we'll help you to apply for benefits and support available from the government or if you are doing this yourself, let us know when your circumstances change.

I offer my grateful thanks to all of you for your patience and understanding as we have had to change the way we deliver support and services to you, providing a limited repairs service, for example. Our housing officers and tenancy sustainment officers are though, contacting each of you to offer support and advice.

Please keep safe and well and best wishes from all at Horizon.

Bob McDougall
Chair, Horizon Housing Association



CORONAVIRUS

PROTECT YOURSELF & OTHERS

nhsinform.scot/coronavirus

Coronavirus information and advice for customers

Tenant and staff safety is our priority and, in line with UK and Scottish Government advice, we have taken the decision to close our offices to the public until further notice.

Keep up to date with what we are doing to help our customers during this time by visiting www.horizonhousing.org/coronavirus or following our Facebook page [@HorizonHA](https://www.facebook.com/HorizonHA).

What does this mean for you as a tenant?

We're working hard to continue to deliver essential services such as emergency repairs and gas safety checks.

Please note response times for our enquiries, complaints and customer services teams will be slower as we focus on emergency contacts.

To reduce spread of the virus, we will limit services to the following:

- **Housing team:** Our housing officers are offering a telephone service for enquiries between the hours of 9am and 4pm. Home visits will only be carried out in an emergency. Please email e-mail@horizonhousing.org in the first instance or, **if urgent**, call **0330 303 0089**.
- **Money and benefit advice:** Our tenancy sustainment team continues to provide benefit, money and debt advice through a phone service. Please email e-mail@horizonhousing.org or, **if urgent**, call **0330 303 0089**.
- **Repairs:** Our teams will be carrying out emergency and urgent repairs only. Emergency repairs are repairs that require immediate attention to ensure the safety of tenants and the security of the property.

They include:

- total loss of water or electricity;
- total loss of heating (in cold weather);
- serious roof leaks; and
- breaches of security to outside doors and windows.

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If you have reported a repair and we aren't able to carry out the repair, we'll arrange this to happen at a later date.

The only exceptions to this will be if your gas service needs to be carried out and we are close to the anniversary date, or if you require an emergency repair. When this happens, we'll let you know what actions we'll need to take.

If you have an **emergency repair**, please call **0330 303 0089**, pressing option 2, and a member of our team will assist you. You can also report a repair through our app or at **www.horizonhousing.org/tenants/repairs-and-improvements/how-to-report-a-repair/**.

When you contact us about your emergency repair, we will ask you some questions about your current situation and whether you are self-isolating. Please be patient with us while we ask these questions. These are required to protect the health and wellbeing of you, our staff and our contractors, which is essential in allowing us to maintain services.

If it is deemed essential and a member of staff does attend your home, they will:

- ask some further questions at the front door before entering the property;
- distance themselves by at least two metres from anyone in the property;
- avoid touching surfaces where possible;
- wear protective gloves and other additional protection equipment where necessary; and
- use hand sanitiser before and after the visit.

To keep our colleagues/contractors safe, we ask you also stand at least two metres away from them where you can.

- **Housing applications and allocations:** We are no longer advertising properties but continue to work with councils to prevent homelessness. If you are at risk of homelessness, please contact your local council.
- **Stair and close cleaning:** We had temporarily stopped the close cleaning carried out by our estates team, but will be re-instating this once our staff have the appropriate protective equipment, although it will continue to be kept under review. You will find more information on our website.
- **Grounds maintenance:** Our estates team will be re-starting the ground maintenance work and, as with the stair cleaning, we will keep this under review, following Government guidance.
- **Tenant engagement:** In the interests of tenant and staff safety, meetings between our resident improvement group (RIG) and TIS are taking place online. They continue to work on the satisfaction scrutiny project.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, we're here to help.

If you have lost income and think you will struggle to pay your rent as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, please contact us as soon as possible on e-mail@horizonhousing.org or **0330 303 0089**.

This is a challenging time for many people, however, tenants who can afford to pay rent should do so. This means our essential services can continue to run smoothly.

Please stay in contact with us and make payments when you can towards rent and arrears. If you do this, we will continue to review rent accounts and keep in touch.

Other ways to pay your rent

If you currently pay your rent in cash, we ask you consider one the following options:

Direct Debit Paying by Direct Debit is stress free and ensures your rent is automatically paid each month.

Payment is taken directly from your bank account. This is now a completely paperless process and can be set up over the phone using your bank account number and sort code.

To set up a Direct Debit, please contact us on e-mail@horizonhousing.org or **0330 303 0089**.

To make this process quicker, please have your tenancy number handy.

Allpay Call allpay on **0844 557 8321** or visit www.allpay.net to pay by credit or debit card. You can also download the allpay app (via Apple App Store or Windows Phone store and Google Play) onto your mobile phone to pay by credit or debit card.

Remember to quote your name and allpay reference number with each payment.

MyHorizon app With MyHorizon, you can report a repair, check your rent balance, pay your rent and much more 24 hours a day, seven days a week!

Search MyHorizon in Google Play and the App Store. All you need to register is your tenancy reference number. For more information, visit www.horizonhousing.org/myhorizon.

If you need help with any of the information above, please email e-mail@horizonhousing.org.

Taking care of your mental wellbeing

While staying at home due to coronavirus, it's important to take care of your mind as well as your body.

Below are some tips and advice from NHS One You to help you keep on top of your mental wellbeing and cope with how you may feel while staying at home. To read the full article, visit www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mindmatters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-hometips/.

Plan practical things Try to work out how you can get any household supplies you need. You could try asking neighbours, family or friends or find a delivery service. You should continue to access treatment and support for any existing physical or mental health problems where possible. Let services know you are staying at home and discuss how to continue receiving support.

If you need regular medicine, you might be able to order repeat prescriptions by phone, or online via a website or app. Contact your GP and ask if they offer this. You can also ask your pharmacy about getting your medicine delivered or ask someone else to collect it for you.

Connect with others Maintaining healthy relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family while you're at home – by phone, messaging, video calls or online – whether it's people you usually see often, or reconnecting with old friends or neighbours.

Talk about your worries It's quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember, it's ok to share your concerns with others you trust – doing so could help them too. Or you could try a charity helpline or webchat.

Support is also available from the following organisations:

- Breathing Space: **0800 83 85 87**
- MIND: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing
- Samaritans: **116 123** or www.samaritans.org
- SHOUT: Text SHOUT to **85258** or visit www.giveusashout.org

Look after your body Our physical health affects how we feel. Try to make sure you and your family eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Avoid smoking or drugs and try not to drink too much alcohol. It can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse.

Do not stay glued to the news Try to limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the outbreak, including on social media, and think about turning off breaking-news alerts on your phone. Use trustworthy sources – such as the UK Government, Scottish Government and NHS websites – and fact-check information from the news, social media or other people.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on freephone **0800 200 0247** or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

If you're worried about a vulnerable child, please contact the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000** or help@nspcc.org.uk.

Staying in touch by video

Now more than ever, it's important to stay in touch with loved ones. What could be better than a phone call to a relative or friend to cheer up their day? A video call!

If they have an internet connection, smart phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer with a webcam, they can video call you as easily as making a voice call.

There are lots of ways to video call and almost all of them can be done using any type of phone, tablet or computer.

Below is a list of services which are the easiest to use – most can have more than two people chatting at the same time. All of them require you to either download an app for a phone or tablet, or sign-in and use the service on a browser such as Chrome.

The icon which activates video calls on most of these apps looks like this:



Different video call services do not work with each other – someone only using Facetime can't video call with someone only using Duo – so everyone needs to use the same service.

Don't worry about people video calling when you don't want them to see you, or it is at a time which is not convenient, you can just refuse the video call, just like a normal voice call.



Facebook Messenger: If you want to use this, you will need to have, or set up, a Facebook account. You will need to be 'friends' with someone on Facebook to video call them. For phones, find this in the app stores, or search for 'Facebook' in a browser for computers.



Whatsapp Videocall: For phones, find this in the app stores, or search for 'Whatsapp' in a browser for computers. You sign up for the service once the app is downloaded and can invite contacts from your phone. You can then videocall any other Whatsapp users who you're connected with.



Google Hangouts: You will need a Gmail email account to use this. For phones, find this in the app stores, or search for 'Google hangout' in a browser (Chrome is best for this service) for computers.



Duo: This is particularly useful on Android phones as you can videocall anyone directly from your contacts, although for the first call they will need to give permission on their own phones to accept the request. For phones, find this in the app stores, or search for 'Google Duo' in a browser for computers.



Skype: Perhaps the best known videocall service. For phones, find this in the app stores, or search for 'Skype' in a browser for computers.



FaceTime: For Apple devices only – iPhones, iPads, and Mac computers. This is built into Apple devices and allows you to video call your contacts for free.



Zoom: Connect with anyone on iPad, iPhone and other mobile devices. The basic package is free for 40 minutes and allows to you video chat with up to three participants.

Learning at home – let's do this!

We know this is a worrying time for parents and kids, with new routines, extended times at home and uncertainty. You may be worried about how your child will learn over the coming weeks, but please don't panic.



You're not expected to provide the curriculum your children receive from school. Give your children fun, everyday learning activities! Play is the greatest work a child can engage in and don't underestimate the enormous learning opportunities offered by:

- planting and nurturing seeds and bulbs;
- writing letters to elderly relatives or those in care homes;
- letting them do chores around the house;
- building dens, chill out zones and quiet places;
- reading books;
- writing a recipe for dinner and helping in the kitchen;
- taking part in arts and crafts activities;
- playing board games;
- making a vlog/blog (for older children – remember to stay safe online - keep your personal details private);
- having a movie day/night - take time together to relax; and
- watching child friendly news – talk about what's happening, reassure them they are safe and loved.

Here's a list of free online sites to try too:

www.glowconnect.org.uk: Allows learners to work in a variety of ways, from collaborating with peers to working individually at their own pace. All school children will already have an account.

www.sumdog.com: Helps children enjoy maths and spelling.

www.sqa.org.uk: Provides users with access to past papers and national qualification course information.

www.myworldofwork.co.uk: My World of Work is Scotland's career information and advice website run by Skills Development Scotland. Don't forget to also look out for online fitness classes and downloads for audio reading. Joe Wicks and David Walliams are currently offering free access to fitness classes and audio books respectively.

Please remember, if your child is entitled to free school meals, you can still access help through your local council. Details can be found on their website or social media pages.

Change of gas contractor

We recently changed our gas contract to Kingdom Gas.

If you have any heating or hot water issues, please contact Kingdom Gas by phoning Horizon on 0330 3030 089 and choosing option 1.



Due to the coronavirus outbreak, we may only be able to carry out an emergency service. We appreciate your cooperation and patience during this period of uncertainty.

Telephone satisfaction survey

We're committed to hearing your views and are working with an independent market research company, Research Resource, to complete a telephone customer survey.

The survey will be carried out from 6 to 24 April and asks for feedback on the services we provide and how happy you are with your home and neighbourhood.

Your feedback is very important to us as it lets us know what we are doing well and where we can make improvements.

The interviews will last around 10 minutes and will be carried out during the day, early evening and at weekends. Your answers are confidential, and the findings will not identify you as an individual.

Taking part is completely voluntary but we hope you will take the time to participate.

To find out more, visit www.horizonhousing.org/survey2020.



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