

24 March 2020

To PHA Customers

Impact of Coronavirus

We are writing to you about some changes we need to make in order to protect you, our customers and our staff. This means a change to the way we deliver our services during these unprecedented times. The last few weeks have been a very challenging time for our business as well as the whole country and there is likely to be uncertainty for the weeks ahead.

This letter is to give you some reassurance that we have your interests at heart, but we must make some difficult decisions about the way we operate. The advice and guidance is changing daily and our Board and Leadership Team are in constant contact in order to update our contingency plans.

Our Staff and Visits to the Office

Our office is closed to the public and there are no face to face meetings. From Tuesday 24 March 2020 all of our staff will be working from home. This has been a difficult decision for us, but we have put plans in place to minimise disruption to our customers.

Contact details for our key staff are included with this letter. You will still be able to contact us by telephone, text, e-mail and letter. At this time, we are unable to say when the office will re-open, so please check our website and social media pages for updates.

Repairs Service

Where possible, we are trying to maintain our repairs service but would appreciate if you only contact us about emergency repairs. For example, no heating or hot water.

- **Partick Housing Association Freephone Repairs** **0300 303 1703**

You can also contact:

- Lift maintenance – City Building 0800 595 595
- Transco – if you have a gas leak 0800 111 999
- Scottish Power – if there is power loss in your local area 08452 727 999
- Scottish Water – if there is a loss of water supply in your local area 0845 600 8855

If you need to report a repair, our repairs staff and our contractors will ask you some screening questions before arranging to visit your home. If you or anyone in your household is self-isolating or displaying symptoms of Coronavirus then you must let us know.

Our contractors have asked us to remind tenants of the importance of 'social distancing' when they call at your home to carry out a repair – this requires that you maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the visitor. This measure is to protect you as well as the contractor.

Kitchen and Bathroom Installations

We have recently put on hold our planned maintenance contracts for kitchen and bathroom installations. Our contractors will contact you in the future to reschedule any surveys or planned works. We are sorry about the disappointment and inconvenience, but plan to do this work within your property as soon as we can when the current situation changes.

Paying your Rent

We understand that this is an anxious time for all of us and are aware that a number of you may be experiencing recent financial changes and your income might be affected.

Please contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible if you need help or advice to discuss any concerns or difficulties with paying your rent. The Government has announced some financial support for those whose income may be affected, but it is important that you contact us so we know that your circumstances might have changed and can advise you.

Some tenants might be able to apply for Universal Credit if you are experiencing a change in circumstances that may affect your income. Universal Credit can help with both daily living expenses and housing costs. Our staff can provide you with advice and assistance in relation to making this claim – just call us. Alternatively you can contact Universal Credit directly here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

Universal Credit helpline

Telephone: 0800 328 5644

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Do you qualify? You can use the benefits calculator to find out what benefits you could get, how to claim and how your benefits would be affected if you start work. This service is free to use, anonymous, and has replaced the Benefits Adviser service. <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

Statutory Sick Pay – Eligibility

If you are [self-isolating because of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), you could be able to get Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from the first day from 13 March 2020. To qualify for SSP you must:

- be classed as an employee and have done some work for your employer;
- have been ill for at least 4 days in a row (including non-working days);

- earn an average of at least £118 per week; and
- tell your employer you are sick before their deadline – or within 7 days if they do not have one.

If you are an agency worker you should also be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay.

If you are a new Universal Credit claimant we recommend that you to ask for the 'housing component' to be paid directly to Partick Housing Association so that your rent gets paid. If you are offered an advance payment, please call us to make a rent payment straight away so that you will not fall into rent arrears.

Ways to pay your rent

- You can make a payment by debit or credit card by telephoning on 0141 357 3773, selection Option 2
- To set up a direct debit you can contact your Housing Officer
- You can pay online by visiting www.partickha.org.uk click make a payment and select AllPay

If you receive Housing Benefit, this will continue to be paid directly to us. If you are on Universal Credit and we have what is called a 'managed payment to landlord' this will continue to be the case. But please let us know immediately if there are any changes to your circumstances which could affect your Universal Credit.

If you have any concerns about paying your rent, please contact us immediately and we will do what we can to help.

We appreciate that these are very uncertain times for all of us and we are committed to providing the best service we possibly can in the circumstances. The situation with Coronavirus is changing rapidly but we will do our best to maintain our service to you.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during these challenging times.

Yours faithfully

Partick Housing Association