

## COVID.19 Advice for Tenants living in Privately Rented Properties September 2020

The London Borough of Newham recognises that landlords and tenants within the private rented sector face tough challenges during these unprecedented times. As the government lockdown is lifted we are asking landlords and tenants to take a pragmatic, common-sense approach to resolving issues during this time.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 is now in force. This new Act poses some new restrictions and encourages good practice by landlords.

### ***What if I can't pay my rent?***

Have frank and open conversations with your Landlord at the earliest opportunity if you are unable to pay your rent. Ask your landlord if they are willing to accept lower rent temporarily and if necessary, agree a plan to pay off the arrears at a later date.

You may be entitled to Government Support if you have lost your job or are on temporary leave (furloughed) because of Coronavirus. For more information please see [Government guidance and support for employees](#)

### ***Can my Landlord evict me?***

Only a Court appointed Bailiff can legally evict you after your landlord has followed the correct legal procedures. The new rules mean that Landlords are prevented from seeking possession until 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020 without very good reason. If they do then they must give you a minimum of 6 months' notice on any section 8 or section 21 notice. All existing court proceedings for evictions are suspended until at least 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020, regardless of when your landlord applied to court.

**If your landlord or managing agent does not follow the above steps, then it is illegal to evict you and they can be prosecuted for committing a criminal offence. If they threaten or try to evict you, contact Private Sector Housing Standards on 020 3373 1950 or the Police on 999.**

### ***What if my home needs repairs?***

Landlords' repair obligations have not changed, tenants still have the right to a decent, warm and safe place to live. As the government lockdown restrictions are eased Landlord's and their contractors are able to visit to carry out repairs or inspections for all health and safety issues. Anyone visiting your property to carry out repairs should notify you in advance prior to entering to see if anyone in your household has any coronavirus symptoms or is self-isolating. If no one is, then when working or visiting they should maintain a safe distance and follow the correct hygiene practices as set out in the government guidance. [Government Guidance on working safety in the home](#)

Repairs should not be carried out if someone in your household has coronavirus symptoms, or is self-isolating or shielding unless to deal with an urgent risk to health and safety. Speak with your landlord if someone in your household has symptoms or is self-isolating so that the repairs can be carried out at a later date. If the repairs are needed to rectify an urgent health a safety risk in your home then the landlord and/or contractor will need to rectify this, however they will have to follow the Government guidance to reduce any risk to you and anyone living in your house.

### **Should Gas Safety checks still be carried out?**

Yes, unless you or someone in your household are self-isolating or have coronavirus symptoms then a Gas Safety check by someone on the Gas Safe Register should still be carried out in your property. This ensures that the gas fittings and appliances in your home are safe to use.

### **What if I don't want anyone to come to my home?**

You need to allow your landlord and any contractors access your property to carry out any repairs. However if someone in your home is self-isolating or at high risk, then your landlord should only send someone if there is a serious problem that puts you at risk.

### **I live in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and share my kitchen and/or bathroom with other people, who are not my family. What can I do to help prevent Coronavirus?**

- Reduce social interaction with others, including others who are sharing your home. Please read the latest [government guidance](#).
- If you live with a vulnerable person or someone who might have coronavirus please refer to this [guidance](#).
- If you are self-isolating in shared flats or houses, this can be challenging, but wherever possible, you should separate yourself from other people. You should minimise the time you spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas as much as possible and keep shared spaces well ventilated. Ensure regular cleaning of shared spaces including all surfaces.
- If you share a toilet and/or bathroom, it is important that you clean them after you have used them every time (e.g. wiping surfaces you have come in contact with). You could consider drawing up a rota for showering/bathing, with the tenant self-isolating using the facilities last, before they thoroughly clean the shower, bath, sink and toilet.
- If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it whilst others are present. Take your meals back to your room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly, remembering to use a separate tea towel.
- You should only use your own toothbrush, and use separate eating and drinking utensils (including cups and glasses in the bathroom and bedroom), dishes, drinks, towels, washcloths and bedlinen. You should not share these items with other members of your household, and make sure that you thoroughly clean the area you have used with an anti-bacterial cleaning fluid.
- If you have your own garden it is fine to use it as long as you keep 2 meters away from other members of your household and any neighbours. If possible they should use the outside area separately.
- If you live in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), where you share the kitchen and/or the bathroom with other people who are not members of your family, then your Landlord (or the manager of the HMO) still has a duty to clean the common shared areas such as bathrooms, kitchens and hallways.

### **What if I am at risk of domestic abuse?**

If you or anyone you know feels that they are at risk of domestic abuse then you/they can access help and support by calling Newham Hestia on 0808 196 1482. If you are in immediate danger you should call 999. If you are unable to speak for fear of being heard, you can still dial 999 and once connected press '55' to silently alert the police. You can also access help and support via a number of ways including the Police, online, helplines, refuges and other services. You can find further information here: [Government Guidance on support for domestic abuse](#)

Further guidance and information regarding the current situation can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>