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6 November 2020

Dear Colleagues,

We want to thank everyone for their continued work in delivering services to tenants and communities across Scotland and thought it would be helpful to set out our expectations for service delivery following the introduction on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 of a new five level system of measures to help tackle the spread of COVID-19.

We also wish to provide reassurance to those working in the sector about what the current measures mean for supporting the workforce to stay safe, and for service delivery.

As we all collectively work to keep our country moving throughout this pandemic, suppressing the virus and ensuring people are safe, it is important that we do all we can to ensure that essential services continue to be delivered. A vital factor in this is ensuring that employers, and members of the workforce, feel supported and understand and are able to follow the public health advice.

Services to tenants such as repairs, voids processing, allocations and lettings, dealing with anti-social behaviour, tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention work are all essential services. These should continue to take place throughout the pandemic, in line with public health advice, with employers taking the relevant steps to ensure infection prevention and control measures are in place and that support is available for employees in line with [current public health guidance](#)

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We know that the work of the Housing Sector Resilience Groups, in identifying and helping to resolve the challenges that the sector has, and continues to face in light of the pandemic, has been instrumental in developing safe practices and guidance for the housing sector.

We also recognise that delivering services in these unprecedented times presents considerable challenges and that the lessons learned from responding to the national lockdown in March can be used to help continue service delivery in a Covid-19 safe manner.

A link to the Guidance on Restarting Services can be found here:

<https://www.sfha.co.uk/COVID-19-Briefings#Guide%20to%20Restarting%20Services>

At this time, it is particularly important to ensure the confidence of employees in taking forward the work required to ensure that allocations and voids processing continues following the introduction of the tiered system of measures, especially as we work towards increasing allocations to homeless households.

A link to the Safe Working In Void Properties guidance can be found here:-

<http://alacho.org/covid-19/>

Work can continue to be carried out in people's homes, provided that the tradesperson is well, is not showing COVID-19 symptoms and neither they nor any of their household are self-isolating. This covers tradespeople and professionals such as plumbers, electricians, surveyors, and home improvement services such as carpet and blind fitters.

Tradespersons can share vehicles for necessary work related travel only. Scottish Government safe operation of workplace guidance applies if you are travelling in a vehicle as part of your job or business and sets out the steps to be taken to reduce the risk of infection. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/pages/operational-guide-and-checklist/#traveltowork>

Professionals and trades who need to enter people's homes to facilitate a home move can also continue to do so as long the current public health and safe working guidance can be followed.

Scottish Government [guidance on moving home](#) has been updated to coincide with introduction of the five level system of coronavirus measures on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2020.

All home moves are permitted, including mutual exchanges, provided they can be carried out safely. This guidance provides advice on how to do this. People can move home in all protection levels, and to and from areas with different levels, but landlords, letting agents and individuals may wish to consider whether they can postpone a move and related activities in areas subject to level 4 protections.

Relevant businesses can also continue to support people to move home in all protection levels, and should follow the [Scottish Government's latest guidance for employers and businesses on COVID-19](#).

The guidance on moving home sets out that tradespeople should seek to minimise contact with home occupiers at all times and follow government guidelines on physical distancing and the use of face coverings.

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We also recognise that there may be instances where maintaining physical distancing at all times is not possible for removal people moving items of furniture. It sets out that in those circumstances:

- Removal people should seek to minimise contact with home occupiers at all times and follow government guidelines on physical distancing and the use of face coverings
- Removal people should implement a “buddy” system and ensure that the same people work together when moving bulky items and furniture

People are asked to avoid asking friends or relatives from a different household to come into their home to help them move, where at all possible.

Where work can be undertaken while maintaining physical distancing this should remain the default although close working - with appropriate PPE use - can take place on-site, if necessary, subject to a risk assessment and the relevant safeguards being in place. Site Operating Guidance can be found on the Construction Scotland website here: <https://www.cs-ic.org/constructionscotland/resources/>.

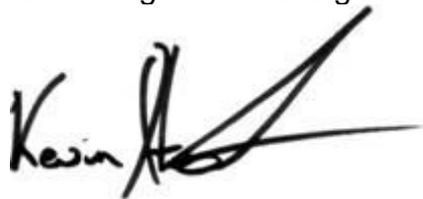
In addition to the above guidance, the Construction Industry Coronavirus Forum (CICV Forum), a collection of construction trade and professional bodies, have also been preparing material that will help businesses and customers to undertake domestic work safely. These can be found on the CICV Forum website here: <http://cicvforum.co.uk/>

We will continue to keep the guidance notes under review and update it as required throughout the pandemic. If you have any questions in relation to housing services then please direct them to Naeem Bhatti – [Naeem.bhatti@gov.scot](mailto:Naeem.bhatti@gov.scot)

The safety of our workforce, tenants and wider communities is an absolute priority at this time. We have set out guidance and advice, and made support available should it be required, for example if an employee shows symptoms of COVID-19 or is a contact and must self-isolate. We understand the anxiety that everyone is facing just now, and that this may be greater for those working in public facing roles.

Recognising that the current situation continues to unfold we recognise the need to continue to respond as and when any new developments arise. It may become necessary at some point to move beyond the five levels of protection and pause some housing related activity for a short period of time to manage the spread of COVID-19. While this is not the current situation, we will let you know if this has to happen.

We hope you find the content of this letter helpful and we thank you again for all that you and your colleagues are doing in keeping our country safe and moving during these difficult time.



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Scottish Government



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