

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Coronavirus (Covid 19) – Guidance for HMO Landlords

The purpose of this information leaflet is to provide information and guidance to all landlords of multi-occupied properties so that if necessary they can provide advice to tenants in line with government guidance, on what to do if they believe they or other occupiers, have possible coronavirus (Covid 19) infection.

We urge all landlords to abide by the latest Government guidance on COVID-19, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Updated guidance for landlords published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

If a tenant has symptoms of coronavirus they should self-isolate at home for 7 days from when the symptoms started. In line with Government guidance all other residents of the home must also stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days, providing they remain well for that time. Should they develop symptoms they should then self-isolate for 7 days from the onset of symptoms or longer if symptoms persist. Where possible, individuals should not go out even to buy food or other essentials, and any exercise should be taken within your home.

Further information is available from the Public Health England website, which will be updated as more information becomes available.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

During lockdown persons are being encouraged to work from home but you should be aware that for many occupiers engaged in manual labour this will not be possible and depending on their contractual arrangements they may also be at risk of losing income during this period which will affect their ability to pay rent.

Because of this you need to be aware that the government have brought in emergency legislation to prevent private tenants from being evicted if they are unable to pay rent, and Landlords will not be able to commence eviction proceedings for three months. I am sure that the council do not need to remind landlords that eviction by any other means, other than through a court order is not lawful.

If you are a mortgagor and your tenants are unable to pay rent during this time landlords are advised to contact their mortgage lender. Mortgage lenders have agreed to offer payment holidays of up to six months where required, this includes buy to let mortgages.

Tenants may continue to report disrepair to their landlords or agents in the first instance. Landlords still have an obligation to keep properties in good repair free from hazards. For the purposes of inspection or remedying urgent health and safety issues, landlords and contractors should work together with tenants to arrange access to the property in accord with government guidance on social distancing, and working safely. This could include (but not limited to) leaking roofs, boiler break downs (no heating or hot water) plumbing (affecting washing and toilet facilities) broken windows or damage to external doors. Electrical break downs, broken fridges or washing machines or breakdown or repairs required to equipment relied upon by a disabled person.

If you are not able to gain access to the property due to COVID-19 restrictions or are unable to engage a contractor to carry out the necessary work, we recommend that you document to do so and all correspondence with your tenants; as well as informing Environmental Health - g332@Fareham.Gov.UK (Environmental Health Partnership Support).

If your tenants have to self-isolate, this will obviously be a difficult and stressful time so you should encourage them to plan ahead to help make it easier, this should include:

- Considering what they are going to need in order to be able to stay at home for the full 14 days
- talking to their employer, friends and family to ask for their help to access the things they will need to make their stay at home a success
- think about and plan how to get access to food and other supplies such as medications required during this period
- create a contact list with phone numbers of neighbours, schools, employer, chemist, NHS 111
- set up online shopping accounts if possible
- ask friends or family to drop off anything needed or order supplies online, but make sure these are left outside the home for them to collect
- make sure that they keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media
- think about things they can do during your time at home. People who have successfully completed a period of staying at home have kept themselves busy with activities such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films
- many people find it helpful to plan out the full 14 days, such as on a make-shift calendar. This could be useful for tenants to create cleaning or cooking rotas. (see below section on use of shared spaces)

Occupiers should be encouraged to plan in advance what they will do if, for example, someone in the household were to feel much worse, such as having difficulties breathing.

Please ensure that tenant information is updated to advise them that if anyone needs clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at

risk. Advise them that they must not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Use of shared spaces when individuals who live with others in HMO's are required to stay in their room

- If someone is unwell, they should minimise visiting shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas as much as possible, and keep shared spaces well ventilated if possible. They should aim to keep 2 metres from other people and not share a bed with another person.
- If toilet or bathroom facilities are shared, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using regular cleaning products before being used by anyone else.
- If a separate bathroom is not available, consideration should be given to drawing up a rota for washing or bathing, with the person who is unwell using the facilities last, before thoroughly cleaning the bathroom themselves (if they are able or it is appropriate).
- A person who is unwell should use separate body and hand towels from other people.
- They should avoid using shared kitchens whilst others are present. They should take their meals back to their room to eat and use a dishwasher (if available) to clean and dry crockery and cutlery.