



Cornwall Rural Housing  
Association Limited

# CRHA NEWS

## COVID-19 Update

March 2020

We are currently living in strange times with events and advice seeming to change almost day by day.

We don't know if, or when, our ability to send things by post may become restricted, so we are sending this leaflet out now to let you know what we know at the moment, but things are moving so fast that parts of it may well be out of date before you read it!

We don't know what the immediate future will bring, but we anticipate our main challenge will be about being able to find enough contractors willing and able to attend to maintenance issues.

We will therefore be prioritising those works that need to be done to maintain health and safety, and there are likely to be delays in getting other works done.

The key message we have for everyone is to do your best to look after yourselves, your family, friends and neighbours.

At CRHA we will be doing our very best to help you to live safely in your homes.

There are likely to be difficulties ahead, but we ask you to try to be patient and to understand that we will be doing the best that we can with the resources that we have.

Best wishes

**Peter Moore**

**Chief Executive**

## **Changes to service**

As you will know, CRHA places great value on the personalised service we provide to the people who live in our homes, and we try to make sure that we have staff visiting all of our developments on a regular basis.

However, the current Coronavirus pandemic means that we will have to change the way we work to make sure that we minimise the risk of our staff spreading or catching the virus.

We are now writing to inform you that from 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 CRHA staff will only be visiting people where an appointment has already been confirmed.

From week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 all routine visits will be cancelled until further notice. Visits will continue to be made to those properties where it is considered necessary. The following paragraphs will hopefully answer any questions you may have, but do let us know if there is anything we haven't covered by emailing [info@crha.org.uk](mailto:info@crha.org.uk)

## **Will repairs still get done?**

We will still be asking contractors to respond to any repairs that are required to your home, but we will be prioritising those that are required to maintain the health and safety of our residents.

Some contractors are already limiting the visits their operatives make to non-urgent repairs in order to safeguard longer-term services focused on emergency and safety activity. This may mean that there is a slower than usual response to non-urgent repairs.

We request that all residents living in homes with gas boilers to allow access to our contractors to carry out any gas safety checks that are arranged. This will not only keep you safe in your home, but it should also reduce the likelihood of a boiler breakdown as the pandemic reaches its peak when it may be difficult to find contractors who can attend.

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

We will adopt the following guidelines to deal with situations where a tenant is concerned about receiving a visit from CRHA or one of our contractors:

If you request that CRHA staff and contractors do not visit you at home, we will ask if the request is being made because you or a member of your household are self-isolating or are ill with the virus.

If you do not wish to receive a visit because someone is ill or self-isolating, then CRHA will delay any visit until the period of self-isolation or illness ends.

If a visit is absolutely necessary, it will only be made after taking professional medical advice so that we can carry out a full risk assessment.

Any repairs required to your home will generally only be carried out following the end of the self-isolation period. Should any urgent repairs be required a full risk assessment will be undertaken with advice received from medical professionals to decide the best course of action.

If you are not self-isolating but do not wish to receive a visit, we will ask you for the reasons why. We will do our best to respect your concerns and we will not send any members of staff or contractors to your property until such time as you advise us to the contrary.

Your restriction on callers will apply equally to contractors as well as CRHA staff and so any non-urgent repairs you report will not be attended to until your restriction on callers is removed. However, please note that CRHA still has the right to enter your home in cases relating to emergencies or safety issues.

## **Is CRHA's office staying open?**

We will do our best to keep our office open as normal for as long as possible, but in order to avoid a wasted journey it may be better contacting us by using MY CRHA (our online portal) or by emailing us at [info@crha.org.uk](mailto:info@crha.org.uk)



## **How do I register for MY CRHA?**

Simply send an email to [info@crha.org.uk](mailto:info@crha.org.uk) with your name and address requesting that you be set up on MY CRHA.

You will receive a reply to your email, then a further email giving you instructions as to how to register on MY CRHA.

## **Can I still telephone CRHA?**

You can still telephone CRHA on our normal office number, and it will be answered during normal office hours even if we must close our office. However, it could take slightly longer for your call to be answered so please be patient or leave a message if requested.

The normal out-of-hours number to report emergency repairs will also remain operational, but must only be used to report genuine emergencies.

## **What happens if I have difficulty paying my rent?**

Please refer to the information provided by the Government about the help it is putting in place for people experiencing money problems caused by the pandemic.

We will always listen sympathetically to anyone experiencing difficulties, but we do need you to be pro-active in seeking any support that is available, and to work with us to agree a plan to bring your rent account out of arrears within a reasonable time once the crisis is over.

## **How can I pay my rent if I cannot get out of my home?**

An easy way to pay your rent without having to leave your home is to telephone Allpay on **0844 557 8321**.

You can pay your rent using a debit or credit card, but you will need to have your Allpay card to hand.

Please let us know if you need a new Allpay card.

## **How will CRHA keep me updated?**

We will do our best to keep everyone updated, but it is likely that the most useful sources for the latest updates will be MY CRHA, the CRHA website, the CRHA Twitter feed or the CRHA Facebook page.

### **Advice for tenants for homes connected to a sewage treatment plant, septic tanks or sewage pump.**

The current crisis means that we are likely to have difficulties getting contractors to attend to repairs at short notice.

We therefore ask all residents living in properties connected to sewage treatment plants, septic tanks and sewage pumps to be even more careful than usual about what they put into the drainage system.

The drains attached to your toilets are only designed to cope with human waste and regular toilet paper. Please therefore follow the advice previously circulated and do not put anything else into the system, and particularly avoid putting anything like wipes or sanitary products down the toilet.

## **DON'T PANIC!**

We all know that something is going to happen but making yourself ill or anxious by worrying about things will not stop the spread of Covid-19 or make it go away.

Instead of pressing the panic button, we all need to try to stay calm and start thinking about how you, your family and your neighbours will cope if any of you are affected by the virus.

Now is a good time to speak to your family, friends and neighbours to make sure everyone is in daily contact with each other to check that they are alright.

If you know someone who lives alone then let them know it is fine for them to get in touch if they need any help.

If you are someone who lives alone, let your neighbours know that they can do the same, and that you will be happy to try to help them out if they need it.

Someone in New Zealand has called these arrangements making a "pandemic pal"!

Whatever we want to call it, everyone should make a plan for how you could deliver food and medicines to each other if needed.

If a neighbour gets sick, then try to check in with them twice a day.

Make sure you have back up plans for the care of children, pets, and anyone who may need extra help should you become unwell.

## **Minimise your chances of getting sick**

Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands after you've touched shared surfaces, especially before eating.

Wash hands for 20-30 seconds (the internet is full of good ideas for songs you can sing to pass the time) and make sure to dry them thoroughly.

Avoid touching your face. This virus can survive for hours to days as tiny droplets on surfaces which we may inadvertently touch. Then, when we touch our mouth, nose, or eyes, we can infect ourselves.

If you still have to go in to work, or you are out in public, try not to touch things with your fingers. You could try using your knuckles for flicking light switches and pressing lift buttons. Try pushing doors open with your hips rather than your hands. Use your sleeve to pull doors open.

## **Keep all surfaces as clean as possible**

Coronaviruses can hang around on inanimate surfaces like steel for up to 48 hours, glass and wood for four to five days, and plastic for up to nine days. Make sure that all surfaces are regularly and thoroughly cleaned with detergent or disinfectant.

**As the situation is changing daily ensure you keep up to date with the latest Government advice on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).**

**But please remember not to panic. Most people who catch the virus will get over it.**