



Moving into one of our homes during the coronavirus outbreak

We have produced this fact sheet to help as guidance during the period of the Coronavirus outbreak for those wishing to move into one of our properties. The majority of the information below is taken from the Government guidance with some additional information about how we manage lettings during this time.

We want to ensure we protect not only our own staff but also those wishing to move into one of our homes.

One of the simplest steps you can take when moving home is to wash your hands frequently and wherever possible stay at least 2 metres apart from people who are not members of your household.

The process of moving into a new home will need to be different from what we have been used to and more difficult for us as we like to interact with our prospective tenants and give a high quality service. Unfortunately, we have had to adapt our normal practices and procedures to ensure that the risk of the spread of coronavirus is reduced as far as possible.

We will try to be as flexible as possible over this period and be prepared to delay moves, for example if someone becomes ill with coronavirus during the moving process or has to self-isolate. However, we cannot hold a tenancy for too long and we may have to move on to the next applicant if the time period is likely to be longer than 14 days.

What does this mean for my move whilst measures to fight coronavirus apply?

People are free to move home, however the process of moving into a new home will be different.

- We will advise you of our safe systems of working practices when we contact you to ensure you are aware of what is required as we will not be able to meet and interact with you in the normal way. Please ensure you listen carefully to any instructions you are given or are sent to you by email or letter.
- We will reduce the amount of paperwork that you will physically have to handle by sending as much as we can electronically and we will conduct most of the pre-tenancy paperwork with you 'virtually' rather than conduct a home visit or undertake this during a viewing.
- All physical viewings will be limited to a maximum of 2 members of your household and we will always remain either outside the property whilst you are viewing or in a separate room so we can maintain the minimum 2 metres safe distance at all times. We will also ask that you observe this.
- When viewing properties, where possible, you should avoid touching surfaces, wash your hands regularly, and bring your own hand sanitiser.

- We will always leave a minimum of 3 days between a tenant vacating their property and a new tenant moving in.
- When moving between properties, you and those in your household should try to do as much of the packing yourself as you can. Where this is not possible, you should speak to your removal firm in advance. There is further advice about this below.
- All those involved in any aspect of the home moving process should practice social distancing in line with public health advice.
- If you are particularly worried about the risk of infection, then speak to us and any professionals involved, (e.g. removal companies) as they may be able to put in place extra measures.
- You may have to move without being able to get new carpets or soft furnishings supplied at this time. Under these circumstances we will still expect you to take up occupancy of your new home at the start of your tenancy wherever possible unless there is good reason for not doing so. If a person does not move into their home, they may not be able to receive any help with rent payments through housing benefit.
- We will not be able to hold an offer of a tenancy based on you not being able to have carpets or soft furnishings fitted and may have to move onto the next applicant if you refuse on these grounds.

Vulnerable people or those shielding

We recognise people who are shielding or otherwise vulnerable may also have pressing needs to move home, however, this should be balanced with the increased risks presented by coronavirus.

Some moves are likely to be lower risk - for instance if travel can take place using your own transport and you can avoid contact with others.

We would encourage everyone in these categories who intend to move, to make clear their status to all of the professionals involved in the process. They may be able to implement additional precautionary measures to further protect you.

People who have tested positive for coronavirus or self-isolating following an outbreak in the home

Moving home is not appropriate whilst you pose a direct risk of transmitting coronavirus. People who have coronavirus or are self-isolating with their family member/s should not leave their home to either move home, or undertake property viewings.

Should a move be essential, and you fall into this category, for instance due to an urgent health and safety risk, we may need to contact Public Health England/local public health teams for advice before we could proceed with an offer of accommodation.

If you are contractually committed to move home, you should delay your move until all members of your household have come to the end of their self-isolation period.

We may not always be in a position to 'hold' a property for you in these circumstances and may have to move on to the next applicant but this will not affect your status on our waiting list.

Moving your belongings

Removal firms are able to operate, although they may need to adjust their usual procedures in order to ensure moves happen as safely as possible.

- We encourage you to contact removal firms as early as possible in advance of your move.
- You and your household should also try and do as much of the packing yourself as possible. However, where this is not possible, you should speak to your removal firms in advance.
- We ask that, where possible, you clean your belongings, with standard domestic cleaning products before they are handled by others, including removal firms.
- Whilst the removers are in your home, you should ensure any internal doors are open and seek to minimise your contact with the crew, maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres where possible.
- All parties should wash their hands and avoid touching surfaces where possible to reduce the risk of transmitting the coronavirus.
- You should not provide refreshments but you should ensure they have access to hand washing facilities, using separate towels or paper towels if possible, which should be washed or disposed of safely afterwards.
- Everyone involved in the moving process must follow social distancing to minimise the spread of the virus.

If you have any concerns, please speak to a member of our Housing Team who will be happy to answer any query you may have.