

COVID-19 Virus (Coronavirus) Question and Answers

IMPORTANT: If you begin self-isolation as a result of having suspected or diagnosed COVID-19 symptoms and you have had contact with Cirencester Housing contractors or staff in the two weeks prior, please notify Cirencester Housing immediately upon the need to self-isolate. This is so we can take action to help prevent the spread of the virus.

1. How is Cirencester Housing responding to the spread of the Covid-19 virus?

We are well prepared for disruption caused by the virus and have good business continuity arrangements. Our response will be '**business as usual**', however, we have already taken some steps to prioritise the safety of tenants and staff along with core business functions. Our aim will be to minimise disruption to our everyday activity and services. Where there is disruption, we would ask for your understanding and patience.

2. Is the Cirencester Housing office still open?

Our office remains open, but staff attendance may be reduced. To better support you, we are arranging to receive phone calls Monday 9:30am to 5pm, Tuesday to Friday 9:30am to 4:30pm.

We will do our utmost to answer the phone if you call. However, we are a small team and some members are not always available. It is important that you leave us messages to enable us to respond to your call. When you phone in, we will be asking you some questions that will help us keep you informed and support you during the Covid-19 pandemic. This might include paying your rent, meeting to sign paperwork or other appointments arranged with Cirencester Housing staff.

We will reduce the level of staff in the office by enabling more home working. This decision helps reduce the risk to staff of catching or passing on Covid-19. It will also help to safeguard the services we offer to residents and core business functions. If it becomes necessary for staff to work from home, our contact phone number (01285 658377) should be used as normal, as calls will be diverted through to a mobile.

You should avoid visiting the office unless it's urgent. Please phone ahead to ensure the appropriate member of staff is available to meet with you. You are likely to be asked a set of questions to determine the necessity of a face to face meeting and your current Covid-19 risk. Interactions will be conducted following government social distancing advice. Visitors who call to our office door will be asked to step back 2 meters (approx. 6 feet) before we open the door.

3. Will Cirencester Housing staff still attend appointments and visit tenants?

Tom Coggins (Housing Officer) will attend appointments with tenants in their homes only when necessary and after determining it is safe for you and him. Other Cirencester Housing

Cirencester Housing

Customer Service: 01285 658377

Repairs Free Phone: 0800 0418377

SMS Text: 07919 698874

Email: contact@cirencesterhousing.org.uk

Website: www.cirencesterhousing.org.uk

First Floor South Wing, Cotswold District Council Office, Trinity Road, Cirencester GL7 1PX

staff will not visit you in your home to minimize the risk of exposure. Where possible, we will offer alternatives such as phone, video calls and email communication.

4. Will Cirencester Housing repairs and maintenance contractors still be making and attending appointments?

Cirencester Housing has taken a decision to have a free phone number for tenants to use in reporting repairs. This new number, 0800 0418377, is free to use from any landline or mobile phone. The number will phone the NKS repairs number. We recommend that you programme into your phones Cirencester Housing Repairs 0800 0418377. You may continue to also use the NKS repair phone number.

NKS and the other contractors that deliver repairs and maintenance services on behalf of Cirencester Housing will determine their company's response to attending homes and providing services. This includes ensuring their staff and operatives have the latest advice, guidance and directives from the Government on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and what to do if they feel unwell.

NKS and other contractors have been advised to contact tenants before attending appointments to ensure the occupants are well and not in self-isolation. Should the tenant or any occupants be in self isolation, the appointment will be cancelled. Rescheduling of appointments needs to be done by the tenant after they have completed the period of self-isolation. If you require assistance with this, please contact Cirencester Housing.

Emergency, urgent and gas servicing repairs and maintenance will be prioritised. If your household is in self-isolation, and you need an emergency repair, this needs to be considered on a case by case basis on how to respond. In the first instance, phone 0800 0418377 requesting an emergency repair explaining you are in self-isolation. It is important that we leave no household in unsafe conditions.

If you are not in self-isolation and refuse access to conduct essential repairs and maintenance, Cirencester Housing will contact you to discuss what is necessary to ensure your home is safe and Cirencester Housing is meeting its health and safety requirements as a landlord.

Contractors have been advised to ensure that all occupied homes are left with washing, cooking and toilet facilities at the end of the working day to ensure essential facilities are in place should tenants have to self-isolate over-night.

5. What about cleaning the communal areas within flat blocks?

Cirencester Housing's contractor will continue to clean the communal areas within our blocks of flats on a monthly basis. If for some reason this service must be discontinued, affected tenants will be notified. Tenants that live within blocks of flats should consider wiping down door handles, banister rails and any other frequently touched areas in accordance with government advice to help protect your household and your neighbours from the potential exposure to Covid-19.

6. What do I do if I'm self-isolating?

Now is the time to pick up the phone and communicate with family and friends or your local community. The government recommends people self-isolating put notices on their door. Cirencester Housing is happy to provide you laminated notices for this purpose. Contact us to request one.

Below is a list of considerations that may help you prepare and sustain a positive frame of mind during self-isolation. Make your own list and how you are preparing. If you are concerned you may not be able to manage all your needs, contact family and friends for assistance. If you require further support or assistance, we have provided a list of contacts for you to use at the end of this Q&A. If you still need assistance, please contact Cirencester Housing and we will do our best to help.

- Food: do you have a way to get food delivered?
- Medication: do you have enough medication, or a way to get more?
- Cleaning: are your cleaning supplies stocked up?
- Money: can you budget for any higher bills or expenses? Will you save money from lower transport costs that you could spend elsewhere?
- Work: can you work from home or not? If not, what are your rights to payment or benefits?
- Health: can you reorganise any planned therapy or treatments?
- Commitments: can someone else help you care for any dependents, walk your dog, or take care of any other commitments?
- Connectivity: have you checked the contact details of the people you see regularly, like their phone numbers or email addresses?
- Routine: can you create a routine or timetable for yourself? And if you live with other people, should you create a household schedule? Do you need to agree how the household will run with everyone at home all day?
- Exercise: what physical activity you can do inside your home, such as going up and down the stairs, using bean tins as weights, or exercises you can do in your chair?
- Nature: have you thought how you could access nature? Can you get some seeds and planting equipment, houseplants or living herbs?
- Entertainment: have you thought about things to do, books to read or TV shows to watch?
- Relax: have you got materials so you can do something creative, such as paper and colouring pencils?
- Pets: Are you able to provide sufficient animal welfare such as food, water and exercise?

7. What happens if my income is reduced and I struggle to pay the rent?

Please contact Cirencester Housing to discuss the situation. You may be provided with specific guidance, depending on your circumstances. We have also listed organizations that may be able to help at the end of the Q & A.

8. I am calling on behalf of a relative, friend or neighbor who is a Cirencester Housing tenant.

Data protection restrictions can make it difficult for Cirencester Housing to talk about tenants without consent. The best approach would be to call with the tenant present, so a tenant can verify that you have their consent. We will always try and be as helpful to callers as we can. If this is not possible and someone calls Cirencester Housing to provide a health update of a tenant, this is perfectly reasonable as Cirencester Housing will not disclose sensitive information.

9. What do I do if a neighbour is self-isolating?

Whether or not you are good friends with your neighbour's, you should consider them. If self-isolation guidance is stepped up, communicating with your neighbours by phone may become essential. Consider swapping numbers early on and perhaps agree regular neighbourly phone call check-ins. If you are concerned about a neighbour's health do not contact them face to face. You may wish to leave them a note with your phone number to contact you. You may also wish contact Cirencester Housing and we may then be able to contact the neighbour you're worried about or their emergency contact.

As you may recall, Cirencester Housing has recently tried to contact all tenants to check that all household details are accurate and up to date. To help us help you, if you haven't recently updated Cirencester Housing with the details of who is living in your home and your emergency contact, please do so as soon as possible. This way, we are better equipped to support you in times of need, especially those at increased risk of isolation.

10. What is the coronavirus?

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. This strain, Covid-19, is a new strain of coronavirus.

11. What are the symptoms?

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has Covid-19 infection:

- A persistent dry cough
- A high temperature
- Shortness of breath

Generally, infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. See below for resources from charities for different group.

12. What's the best way to prevent the spread of Covid-19?

Follow the NHS and government recommendations.

- Wash your hands often with soap (or soap substitutes) and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser. This is particularly important after taking public transport.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin. You can download a 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' poster (PDF, 940KB) for your workplace from the NHS.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

The below websites provide more detailed advice and is worthwhile reading to best prepare yourself and your household.

If you do not have access to the internet or these websites, please contact Cirencester Housing and we will print the information and post it to you.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

13. Useful contacts

Organisation	Service offered	Contact details	Web address
Boots Pharmacy	Chemist	01285 653019	
British Red Cross	Helps anyone, anywhere in the UK and around the world, get the support they need if crisis strikes.	0344 871 11 11	https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/uk-emergency-response/coronavirus
Chesterton Pharmacy	Chemist	01285 653539	

Organisation	Service offered	Contact details	Web address
Cirencester Foodbank	The Foodbank is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK.	07506 174373	https://cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/
Cirencester Housing	Housing association	01285 658377	https://www.cirencesterhousing.org.uk/
Citizens advice	Free, confidential and impartial advice to anyone who needs it, to help them resolve the problems they face, and we use the intelligence we gather to lobby and influence social policy makers, both locally and nationally	0808 800 0511	https://www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk/
Cotswold District Council	Local authority	01285 623000	https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/
Department for Work and Pension (Cotswold)	Job Centre	0345 604 3719	
G Horton Ltd Pharmacy	Chemist	01285 653042	
Gloucestershire Adults Social Services	Adult safeguarding	01452 426868	https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gsab
Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service	GDASS is a county-wide service designed to reduce the level of domestic abuse and improve the safety of victims and their families.	01452 726 570	https://www.gdass.org.uk/

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Organisation	Service offered	Contact details	Web address
Lloyds Pharmacy	Chemist	01285 658 217	
Mind	provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding	0300 123 3393	https://www.mind.org.uk/
NHS	NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do	111	https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care/nhs-111/
Samaritans	offer listening and support to people and communities in times of need.	116 123	https://www.samaritans.org/
The Churn Project	Offers people who come through its door. We help to find practical solutions to life's issues alongside the vulnerable and marginalized people across the Cirencester community who seek support	01285 380038	http://www.churnproject.org.uk/
Turn 2 Us	Means-tested benefits calculator that informs you the level of benefit entitlement		https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou
Universal Credit	Universal Credit is a payment to help with your living costs	0800 328 5644	