

# Connect Housing

## Coronavirus Outbreak FAQ's

Updated: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020

### Is Connect still open for business as normal through the Coronavirus crisis?

We are doing everything we can to stay open and support our tenants and service users through this crisis. Our employees are now working from home where they can although the situation and advice is changing all of the time.

We'll be keeping our website updated with any changes. Please visit us at [www.connecthousing.org.uk/community-blog](http://www.connecthousing.org.uk/community-blog) for the latest information.

### What should I do if think I have Coronavirus or I am self-isolating?

Your health and well being is our priority and you should contact your GP and follow the latest Government advice. If Connect or any of our partners are due to visit you, please let us know of your circumstances in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

### I normally visit you for enquiries or to pay my rent. Can I still do this?

Our offices are currently closed to the public to encourage social distancing. The Government advice is changing frequently and there will become a time when the current rules are relaxed. Please check our website for the latest information.

### I have an appointment booked – will it still go ahead?

In line with current Government guidelines, we are only attending emergency repairs and essential safety inspections. All other personal visits have been stopped. We will update our website when this situation changes.

### What if I have an emergency repair?

We will try to help you if you have an emergency. Please let us know if you think you could be at risk of Covid-19 or are self-isolating so we can take proper safety precautions to protect both you and our staff. Call us on [0300 5000 600](tel:03005000600) and we'll find a way to help.

### My appointment has been cancelled, when can I rebook?

We do not know when we will be able to resume none emergency repairs so we are not booking in jobs that may have to be cancelled. When the situation changes, we will contact all customers who had a cancelled appointment. It would be helpful if we had your latest contact information including mobile phone number and email address. You can send these to us via the contact form on our website and we'll update our records.

### How is Connect keeping customers safe during emergency visits?

The safety and wellbeing of our employees and customers is very important to us.

If we have to visit you for an emergency repair we will ask you;

- If You or anyone in your home has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- If You or anyone in your home is self-isolating
- If Anyone in your home is at higher risk such as being over 70 or with underlying medical conditions.

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, we'll work with you to assess your need for the visit before deciding what to do next.

When a Technician visits your home, they'll take additional precautions – including wearing protective clothing and hand-washing before and after the appointment. They'll protect you and your family members by keeping a safe distance at all times – and we ask you to do the same.

### How are you making sure Technicians are protected and don't spread the virus to customers?

We don't want anyone that feels unwell or should be self-isolating to feel pressured to come to work so we're offering full pay to all employees who are self-isolating or looking after children or other family members during this difficult time. It's the right thing to do. This includes our Technicians.

The latest Government advice suggests that people infected with Coronavirus COVID-19 can be infected but remain symptom free for a number of days. When a Technician visits your home, they'll take additional precautions – including wearing protective clothing and hand-washing before and after the appointment. They'll protect you and your family members by keeping a safe distance at all times – and we ask you to do the same. This protects both parties from cross infection.

### **I have lost my job or my hours have reduced and I am worried about paying the rent and other bills?**

The current situation is unprecedented and as such many of you will be faced with challenging situations, either through self-isolation, reduced working hours or temporary or permanent loss of employment. This will inevitably have a knock on effect on your financial situation and your ability to pay your rent.

Rental incomes pays for the services that we provide now and in the future and so it is important that as many people continue to pay their rent in full as possible. However, we understand that for the next few months some of you may have difficulties in doing this.

**Please contact us immediately if you are going to struggle to pay your rent.** We have always taken a flexible and supportive approach to working with tenants who face financial hardship. We aim to help you find solutions to be able to keep your tenancy secure.

Our **Money Matters Team** can help you (over the phone) by offering:

- help to apply for any benefits you may be entitled to
- help in managing changes in your income
- access to food bank voucher
- help link you to additional support
- access to a hardship payment in an emergency

Contact us by email on [moneymatters@connecthousing.ork.uk](mailto:moneymatters@connecthousing.ork.uk), via the website or on 0300 5000 600. **Don't delay – the sooner you face this the better we can help you.**

### **I am worried about paying my gas and electricity bills and topping up my pre-payment.**

The Government has launched an emergency package with energy suppliers to ensure no-one faces any additional hardships in heating or lighting their home during the coronavirus outbreak. This package covers both credit and prepayment meter customers – and it includes a range of options from debt repayment plans to hardship funds where necessary.

Importantly, the government has also asked energy suppliers not to disconnect anyone on a credit meter during the outbreak.

If you have a smart meter, you can often top up online or over the phone – check your supplier's website. If not, try to top up your meter more than you usually would in case you need to self-isolate.

You will find more details on the Ofgem website.

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-and-your-energy-supply>

**If you are struggling financially, our Money Matters team can help you to claim benefits and deal with utility suppliers so get in contact with us.**

The Coronavirus outbreak is causing a great deal of anxiety and concern for many reasons including health of loved ones and financial pressure.

Our aim is to keep supporting you and our employees but the increasingly stringent measures being adopted nationwide are making this more challenging and so we ask you to please be patient with us as we adapt to offering our services more remotely and as we will also have staff affected.

Our website will always be updated with the latest information.

Please contact us if you have any concerns that we may be able to support you with. We will always try to help you as best we can.