

Grove Community Housing Association

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants

How can I contact Grove Community Housing while the offices are closed to the public?

While our office is unable to be open to the general public, our dedicated team continue to work as normal to maintain our services to you.

You can reach them during office hours (9.30am-4.30pm Monday to Friday) by phone and email;

- Office contact number Tel. 028 90 773330
- General enquiries including tenant welfare concerns – info@groveha.org.uk
- Rent & Housing enquiries – housing@groveha.org.uk
- Repairs- repairs@groveha.org.uk
- Out-of-hours emergency repairs team- 0800 7313081
(This service will continue to operate for emergency essential repairs only).

Can I still get my repairs done?

To protect our contractors and tenants, internal repairs will be limited to emergency essential work only.

Non-essential repairs will not be carried out at this time.

Essential external repairs and repairs to vacant properties will continue at present.

If you contact the office on Tel. 028 90 773330 or email repairs@groveha.org.uk about a non-essential repair, we will take the detail of the repair and log it in our system for future works.

We will deal with all non-essential repairs when normal service resumes.

Thank you for your understanding and need to keep everyone safe.

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

What is an emergency essential repair?

Emergency essential repairs are those that if not completed, could put you, a third party (e.g. neighbour or pedestrians on the street), or the building at risk, or that will cause a health and safety risk.

These include:

- Loss of heating
- Significant water leaks
- Loss of power
- Immediate health and safety risks where there is significant risk of injury
- Lift not working
- Fire alarm repairs
- Gas boiler servicing
- Critical fire protection work

This is not a complete list; we will assess each repair individually to determine whether it is an emergency or not.

Will emergency repairs be done if I am self-isolating or shielding?

If you or someone in your household are displaying symptoms you can now get tested and are encouraged to follow government advice and self-isolate for 14 days and only leave your home for the test.

Also, if you are shielding on GP advice, or experiencing any of the symptoms, you must let us know when you report your repair or when we are arranging an essential service.

Also inform us if you or someone in your household develops symptoms or receives a positive diagnosis.

We will also ask you to answer some questions about your household's health and recent travel to assess the risk of carrying out the repair before a decision is made.

If your repair is inside the property, and we can proceed with it, we will ask you to isolate yourself from the area of repair for as long as possible before the repair takes place.

We may ask you to undertake other measures, but these will be discussed with you before we arrive and repairs could be delayed until a safer period and this will be discussed with you.

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

A service has been booked (Gas or Electrical) but I do not want a contractor in my home in case they have Coronavirus.

What should I do?

The Association understand that you may be worried to let contractors into your home, but we must keep you safe through gas boiler servicing etc. This is more important than ever as people are having to spend more time at home.

We will need access to your home to complete these vital services and we wish to reassure you that all possible extra safeguarding measures have been put in place to protect you and our contractors.

If you are unwell and displaying any symptoms of the virus, and/or receive a positive test, either before or soon after a contractors visit please contact the office.

For 'emergency' or 'regulatory compliance' work, we will contact you ahead of the visit and complete an assessment over the phone of work to be undertaken, to minimise the length of the visit and ensure everyone's safety as much as possible.

Our contractors will have all the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed and will regularly wash their hands and use hand sanitiser. All surfaces that they touch, will be cleaned before leaving your property.

We would ask that you remain in another room with the door closed and not enter the work area while our contractors are in the property.

If you are concerned about any aspect of this, please contact us and we will discuss individual measures that we can put in place to reassure you.

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

What happens if social distancing is not followed during essential repairs and home visits?

It is very important for the health and safety of our tenants, colleagues and contractors that the two-metre social distancing rule is followed.

If the social distancing guidance is not followed by you or anyone else in your home during an essential visit, our colleagues and contractors will give you a polite reminder and ask you to keep a safe distance.

If this reminder is ignored for a second time, work will be stopped and the contractor or staff member will leave your property immediately.

What do I do if I think my smoke or carbon monoxide alarm is not working?

It is important that you test your smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms weekly by pressing the "test" button.

If your alarm does not sound, please phone the Grove office Tel. 028 90 773330 to let us know so that we can have it repaired or replaced.

Will communal safety checks continue if I live in a flat?

The safety of our tenants remains a top priority. We have made sure that all important safety checks within buildings such as emergency lighting and fire alarm tests are continued weekly.

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

Do I still have to pay my rent?

Yes.

Grove Community Housing is a registered charity and a 'not-for-profit' organisation and rental income is extremely important for the Association to continue to provide homes and services for those in need.

It also allows us to carry out essential repairs and maintenance work.

You need to continue to pay your rent in full when due as the security of your home should always be a top priority.

Should your circumstances change due to loss of income caused by the Coronavirus situation, you must let us know as soon as you can.

We will look compassionately at each case and support you to find a solution and ensure your tenancy with us stays secure.

If you are worried about paying your rent, please get in touch with your housing Officer Paul Stuart on:

Tel: 028 90 773330

or

via Email housing@groveha.org.uk.

Your Housing Officer will be able to discuss your financial situation in confidence and advise on how to claim benefits etc. and get further support and advice if needed.

My income is not affected, can I still pay my rent in the normal way?

Yes. All normal rent payment options remain available:

- Payments via telephone - 02890 773330
- Direct Debit can be set up
- Allpay Card - Payments made in your local shop
- Allpay App - Payments via the app

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact our Housing Officer Paul Stuart on:

Tel: 028 90 773330

or

Email housing@groveha.org.uk.

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

What help is available financially if I have lost my job, had my hours cut, a change to benefits or have no money coming for some other reason?

If your income is affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19) you may be able to claim Sick Pay or benefits to support you through this period.

Your income may be affected due to working less, no longer working, self-isolating, or caring for someone who is sick.

Many employees will be protected during this period as the Government has offered a wide package of support to businesses to help retain staff.

The Government is offering PAYE employees grants to cover 80% of employees' wages (Maximum of £2,500/month per employee) for up to 12 weeks (check on-line for updates).

This support is called the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

This means that you will still receive 80% of your pay if you are not working.

Your employer will contact HMRC for further details.

The Government has also announced a Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Any tenants that are self-employed (Taxi drivers, plumbers and builders etc) can receive a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month, from June.

Anyone that is self-employed can also access benefits such as Universal Credit.

If you need money or benefits advice please contact your Housing Officer Paul Stuart via:

Tel: 028 90 773330
or
Email housing@groveha.org.uk

Please see the link below that outlines the most up-to-date information on the Department for Communities website:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/covid-19-and-benefits>

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

Will I lose my home if I cannot pay my rent?

Where people's income circumstances change due to the Coronavirus, we will look compassionately at each case.

Eviction is always a last resort for any social housing landlord.

All options to assist you in covering the rent due for your home will be explored thoroughly, including reasonable time and repayment plans before eviction is even considered.

This is an uncertain time for many and we understand that some people may experience financial hardship due to the impact of Coronavirus on employment.

Please talk to us early and ease any worry.

If your income is affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19) you may be able to claim Sick Pay or benefits to support you through this period.

You can get the most up-to-date information on the Department for Communities website here:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/covid-19-and-benefits>

Please talk to us early and ease any worry.

Call our Housing Officer (Paul Stuart):

Tel: 028 90 773330

or

Email housing@groveha.org.uk

He will be happy to provide confidential advice and support.

I want to give notice to leave my tenancy, can I still do this?

Yes, you should contact our Housing Officer (Paul Stuart) to discuss and give your 4 weeks' notice, as normal.

Tel: 028 90 773330

or

Email housing@groveha.org.uk

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs for Tenants (Cont'd)

Is Grove Community Housing still organising events and activities?

In line with Government advice all events and activities have been cancelled until further notice.

We will continue to provide tenants with information via our social media, website and engage with you in other ways.

We want to ensure everyone stays safe and supported during these challenging times – to do this we are keeping you informed with useful messages and support on our Facebook page – please follow us:

<https://www.facebook.com/grovecommunityhousing/>

If you have any ideas on how else you would like us to engage with you during this time, please get in touch. If your contact details such as phone number change or household details change please call the office and we will update your records.

What support are you offering to people who are over 70 and other vulnerable tenants?

We are supporting our most vulnerable tenants with weekly welfare telephone calls and continue to offer support to anyone that needs it. Often this is just a 'listening ear' and to check everything is okay.

However any tenant that has a concern, can contact us on:

Tel:028 90 773330

or

Email info@groveha.org.uk

We will signpost them to the appropriate services.

We would especially ask you to let us know if you have been contacted by your GP and are required to 'shield' or 'cocoon' at home, and have no family or friends who are able to support you or they can no longer assist.

If you are calling for assistance for someone else, please ensure you have sought their permission first. We will be happy to try and find the help that you need.

All calls are handled in the strictest of confidence so please do reach out if you need us – we are here and ready to support our community.

We are all in this together.