

May 2020

Home *life*

Wandsworth Council's housing newsletter wandsworth.gov.uk/housingnews

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update



Welcome to this special edition of Homelife. Firstly, may I thank you for your understanding and cooperation as myself and my council colleagues work to support you as best we can during this difficult time.



I appreciate that this is a deeply worrying time for everyone. Housing colleagues and I will stay in touch with residents as much as possible to provide updates on how the council is responding to the situation and what services we're continuing to provide. Our priority continues to be residents' welfare.

This special edition of Homelife provides information on housing services and advice on staying well and safe. This is a fast-moving situation and the information given here is subject to change; please keep checking the council's website for the most up-to-date information.

Finally, I would like to thank you for continuing to follow Government advice. It is crucial that we all work together as a community to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

Cllr Kim Caddy
Cabinet Member for Housing

Estate and block cleaning

The new cleaning contracts commenced at the start of April as planned. Cleaners are working hard during this challenging time, paying particular attention to parts of blocks such as door handles, push plates, call panels etc. ensuring that these are thoroughly cleaned regularly.

To report a cleaning issue on a housing estate email HESSeniors@wandsworth.gov.uk

What to do if you need help

A Community Hub helpline has been established to coordinate the support offered by the council working in partnership with Wandsworth's many voluntary organisations.

This helpline has been launched as a first response for residents. It can signpost you to the latest information and government advice, as well as other services the council can provide. It can also help if you are vulnerable, perhaps due to age or a medical condition, and need help to access

medical and food supplies at the moment.

If you or someone you know needs this assistance and there aren't existing family, friends or other support that can step in, then please contact **020 8871 6555** or covid19support@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk.

Concerns about paying your rent or service charge

With some people facing reduced incomes or job loss as a result of the outbreak, the council has announced that it will be relaxing its normal rules on rent arrears and non-payment of council tax. Allowances will also be made for leaseholders who are struggling to pay their service charge bills.

If you are concerned that you cannot maintain payments as a result of the outbreak, for rent matters you should contact the rent collection service on **020 8871 8987** or rents@wandsworth.gov.uk; for service charges contact Capita on leaseholderslbw@capita.co.uk; for council tax contact counciltax@wandsworth.gov.uk.

Housing receptions

Both housing receptions (Putney Bridge Road and the Western area office) remain closed to visitors. If you need to speak to your area housing team, please contact them on:

- Western Area: 020 8871 5530
- Central Area: 020 8871 5333
- Eastern Area: 020 8871 7439
- Southern Area: 020 8871 7288

If you need to speak to someone from the housing advice and allocations service please email housingapplications@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk. Emails are checked daily and someone will contact you to discuss your query as soon as possible. If you have a housing emergency call the advice service on **020 8871 6161**.

Useful sources of information



The latest information from the council:
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/coronavirus



The latest information specifically on housing services
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housing



Latest information/advice from the Government:
www.gov.uk/coronavirus This includes what you can and cannot do during this time and health advice from the NHS.



Tips on maintaining physical and mental wellbeing while at home:
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters



Fly-tipping puts extra strain on services

Help us to help you

Our cleaning and rubbish collection staff are working extremely hard to keep estates clean and safe during the Coronavirus crisis - so please don't make their job harder by dumping rubbish and adding to the problem.

Waste and recycling centres are closed, and the council is not operating its bulky waste and garden waste collection services, in line with Government guidance.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Penalties

Our enforcement officers have the power to issue £400 fixed penalty notices on the spot for fly-tipping. People who dump rubbish on the street or anywhere else will be fined or prosecuted.

The maximum penalty for fly-tipping is £50,000 fine and/or 12 months in prison.

Report fly-tipping on a housing estate by emailing
HESSeniors@wandsworth.gov.uk.

Domestic abuse and Coronavirus

As a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, many victims of domestic abuse face additional challenges and barriers to accessing support.

While self-isolating, families will spend extended periods of time together and it is recognised that controlling behaviour and/or tensions may rise, escalating the risk of abuse and violence.

If you are currently experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone - services are still here to help. Don't hesitate to contact any of the following:

- If you are in immediate danger always call **999**. For non-emergencies dial **101**.
- Wandsworth Independent Domestic Violence Advocate: **020 7801 1777** or email vs.wandsworth@victimsupport.cjsm.net. Open Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm.
- National Domestic Violence Helpline: **0808 2000 247**. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Women's Aid live online chat service: <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk>. Available Monday – Friday, 10am – 12pm
- Men's Advice Line: **0808 801 0327**. Open Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm.

Resident Management Organisations

If you live in one of the Borough's 12 Resident Management Organisations (RMOs) you will have received information from your RMO on how it is operating at the moment.

Most of the RMOs' offices are closed (although some remain open where it is safe to do so). Cleaning services at all are uninterrupted with a special focus on contact points such as door handles, lift buttons and handrails.

Most have volunteers available to assist residents by collecting shopping and medication. For example, Wimbledon Park has partnered with City Harvest to provide free emergency food deliveries to the estate every week - available to all residents, so people don't need to go shopping as often. Please contact your RMO office for more details of what support is on offer or if you wish to offer your services.

Repairs and maintenance

All non-essential contact should be avoided, meaning that residents should expect only urgent, essential repairs to be carried out at this time.

If you are due to have a contractor or council officer visit your home and anyone in your household is showing symptoms of Coronavirus, you must contact your area team as soon as possible to inform them.

Noise nuisance

We would like to remind all residents to be both tolerant and considerate of their neighbours. Everyone is at home at the moment so there will be an increase in normal living noise, but we still ask that it be controlled and kept to a minimum to avoid disturbing others. To report noise nuisance please call **020 8871 7490**.

Help for your community

The council appreciates what many residents are already doing to help more vulnerable members of their communities by shopping, picking up medicine and just keeping in contact with neighbours who are having to stay in-doors.

More than 3,000 Wandsworth residents have signed up to volunteer using the council's online volunteer registration service. The council would like to hear from local groups and voluntary organisations who are looking for volunteers so that we can connect them with your organisation.

If you have a volunteer opportunity please email wgf@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk with details of the role, and we can help you connect with volunteers in your area.

If you are an existing voluntary or community group in the borough, or you are considering forming one in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please contact the Voluntary Sector Coordination Service (part of

Wandsworth Care Alliance) by emailing communications@wandcareall.org.uk to make sure you have the right processes in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those residents who are most vulnerable during this time.

Funding for voluntary groups

There is various funding available for community and voluntary groups at this time. For example, the Big Local SW11 Alliance has funding available for local groups in Battersea working in response to Coronavirus. Please see the following link on the council's website for more information on what funding is available and how to apply:

www.wandsworth.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/volunteering/grants-for-the-community-and-voluntary-sector.

Safe use of lifts

Please don't share lifts with anyone from another household at the moment. To help stop the spread of Coronavirus, we must all abide by social distancing guidelines set out by the Government.

Current advice is that we should only leave our homes when necessary for a few limited reasons and that when out we should stay at least two metres from people not part of our household. This includes the communal areas of blocks and when using lifts. If there is already someone from another household in the lift, please do not get in as well. Instead, you should either use the stairs or wait for the lift to be vacated.

Thank you for your continued cooperation which helps to keep you and your neighbours safe.

Sheltered housing update

The council manages 25 sheltered housing schemes across the borough with just over 1000 residents.

We are working to protect our older residents who may be more vulnerable to severe symptoms of Coronavirus. In line with social distancing guidelines communal lounges and kitchens have closed and residents have been advised to avoid social contact around their scheme.

All properties are connected to the WATCH community alarm system which operates 24 hours a day. Emergency Response Officers that need to attend someone's home have access to full personal protective equipment.

Sheltered housing officers continue to provide essential services to residents and ensure their needs are met. Officers visit the schemes regularly to provide reassurance and ensure residents' safety and wellbeing. During visits, officers carry out health and safety checks, inspecting the building to ensure it remains secure and testing the fire alarm system and the CCTV equipment. Residents receive at least two calls per week from officers using the Warden Call system and telephone. These welfare calls will continue throughout the outbreak. The current approach to keeping our residents safe has been endorsed by the council's Director of Public Health.

For any sheltered housing residents with any concerns, please pull the emergency cord for urgent assistance or contact your sheltered housing officer or the Business Support team on 020 8871 8198.



Community spirit on our estates

Throughout the Coronavirus crisis we have seen wonderful examples of community spirit across our estates. Over the Easter weekend residents of Innes Gardens were touched to see a collection of Easter eggs for residents to help themselves to.