



Housing Services, Solutions and Homelessness

Frequently Asked Questions

Changes to the housing services

Q: Are there changes to housing services?

We have plans in place to keep essential housing services running. However, to slow the spread of the virus and help keep everyone safe, our housing services are changing.

We are doing everything we can to ensure urgent requests and those most in need are taken care of as a priority and we thank you for your patience and understanding.

Whilst our telephone lines remain open, until further notice we are:

- service centres are open to assist with urgent housing services issues by appointment only
- prioritising emergency and urgent repairs
- stopping face-to-face resident engagement events and drop-in surgeries
- equipping staff with personal protection equipment to prevent unintentional spread of the virus
- increasing cleaning of communal area surfaces including door handles, lifts and switches
- closing our halls, playgrounds, pitches and youth clubs.

Call us on 0800 358 3783 for urgent housing issues, such as emergency repairs otherwise please email us at housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk or make sure of your online services at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing where you can report repairs and anti-social behaviour, pay bills, find out about parking and more.





Q: What should residents do?

A: Contact us on 0800 358 3783 for urgent housing services issues, such as emergency repairs – alternatively please email us at housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk or make use of our online services at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing where you can report repairs and anti-social behaviour, pay bills, find out about parking and more.

Please tell us if you or your household:

- are self-isolating due to coronavirus symptoms, and we are due to visit
- if you need help staying at home
- have updated your email address or telephone numbers.

Please follow the latest government advice at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus and visit www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus for updates, information and any changes to council services.

Communications and advice

Q: Are you contacting residents and what advice are you giving?

A: We are contacting vulnerable tenants and leaseholders, residents in temporary accommodation and we are also working with partners to proactively support rough sleepers. We are also proactively calling on those most vulnerable including people experiencing homelessness.

Please visit www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus for updates, information and any changes to council services.

Everyone should do what they can to stop coronavirus spreading. Please protect yourself and others by following the latest government advice on social distancing and staying at home: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus, use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do: www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19. If you have no internet access, call NHS 111. For medical emergencies dial 999.





Q: How will you keep residents updated?

A: We are updating residents by post, email and text, and also carrying out some phone and house calls to reach out to residents who are digitally isolated.

You can find out more online at www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus and sign up for digital updates for the latest on our coronavirus response.

Q: What housing services are available online?

A: Residents can use our online services anytime at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing to:

- report and find out about your repair
- report anti-social behaviour
- pay and find out about your bills
- find out about parking.

Supporting (vulnerable) residents – how to get help or volunteer to help

Q: How are you supporting those most in need?

A: We're updating all residents and proactively calling on those most vulnerable including people experiencing homelessness.

We are also linking residents requiring additional support to help with things they need to successfully stay safe at home and regularly checking-in on them.

In the first instance, if you or anyone you know needs help as a result of coronavirus, please email us at westminsterconnects@westminster.gov.uk, call 020 7641 1222 or send us the details online at www.westminster.gov.uk/ask-help.

If you are concerned about an adult who you think requires social care and support or you have a safeguarding concern, telephone 020 7641 1444 or 020 7641 1175 or email: adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk.





If you are concerned about a child and you have a safeguarding concern, telephone: 0207 641 4000 or email accesstochildrensservices@westminster.gov.uk.

Q: What should residents do to help other residents/volunteer in the local community?

A: Westminster Connects has been set up to bring the community together in Westminster and link volunteers to those who need help.

If you want to volunteer visit www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus-how-you-can-help and register with us.

We will keep the website www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus up to date with all the latest information about volunteering and how the council and the community are working together to provide support.

Repairs and planned works

Q: What repairs service is available?

A: The repairs service continues with issues being assessed case by case with priority being given to emergency repairs.

Emergency repairs are critical issues which could pose an immediate health and safety risk, such as fire, loss of electricity or water supply. You can find out more about emergency repairs online at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing/repairs.

If your repair is an emergency, contact us on 0800 358 3783. Otherwise, please make use our online services at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing to report and track repairs.

Q: Will you carry out emergency repairs to households associated with confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A: Please tell us if your household has symptoms of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), so we can assess and agree with you how we will safely carry out your emergency repair. This way we can keep both your household members and our contractors safe.





Q: Will you continue carrying out building safety/compliance checks such as those for gas safety?

A: Yes, it's important residents are safe in their homes and our legal duties as landlord have not changed.

We have a legal duty to repair and maintain gas pipework, flues and appliances in a safe condition, to ensure an annual gas safety check on each appliance and flue, and to keep a record of each safety check. Current advice from the government is that we should make every effort to abide by existing gas safety regulations and take all reasonable steps to comply.

However, no work will be carried out within a household with members isolating due to coronavirus symptoms or where a household member is being shielded - unless it is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household, such as emergency plumbing or repairs.

All of our contractors will take precautions to keep you and themselves safe whilst visiting your property and as outlined in public health guidance. If we are visiting to do a repair, or for any other reason, please tell us in advance if your household has symptoms of coronavirus disease or are shielding, so we can assess and agree with you how we can safely carry out the repair. This way we can keep your household members and our contractors safe.

During this time some repairs that are less urgent may have to wait a bit longer than usual. We will continue to undertake our normal safety checks such as gas servicing and maintain fire alarm systems and lighting.

We are contacting tenants about their annual gas and smoke alarm checks when due, and residents can help us keep them safe by allowing us to safely carry out these checks to their gas appliances and to ensure smoke alarms are fitted and working.

When we make an appointment with you, please tell us if your household has symptoms of coronavirus disease or are shielding, so we can assess and agree with you how we will safely carry out these checks now or at a later date. This way we can keep both your household members and our contractors safe.





All of our contractors will follow all sensible precautions to keep you and themselves safe whilst visiting your property. In line with public health guidance our contractors will:

- keep a minimum of 2 metres apart from household members at all times, this may mean residents waiting in separate rooms
- follow all advice on hygiene and cleanliness before during and after visits (such as washing hands frequently)
- use Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as face mask, gloves, over shoe covers and glasses
- wiping down all surfaces in rooms where work was carried out.

If we are unable make an appointment with you to carry out your annual gas appliance and smoke alarm check, due to restrictions in place to tackle coronavirus, or are not able to engage a contractor to carry out the necessary work - we will document all correspondence with you and contractors, to ensure we remain compliant and make every effort to reschedule the checks as soon as possible.

Find out more gas safety advice Health and Safety Executive here www.gassaferegister.co.uk/help-and-advice/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/

Q: Have you suspended all planned works projects?

A: In line with government advice on social distancing as a result of coronavirus, we have temporarily suspended planned works, including major works and smaller scale projects such as door entry systems, onsite until further notice.

Some essential only elements of building work such as health and safety checks, critical roof and lift repairs may continue where it's safe to do so in line with government advice, to ensure safety and maintain vital services to homes

We are contacting residents to let them know and will continue to review the situation with the latest updates available online at

www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing/major-works

All homes and working site areas have been made safe, secure and weatherproof. There will be regular health and safety checks of the work site including areas with scaffolding, fencing and storage.





We will continue to engage with residents and involve them in future plans, offering support through online consultation and one-to-one calls.

Residents can contact us on 0800 358 3783 or email housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk with any questions and to report emergency repairs in the interim.

Q: When will temporarily suspended planned work projects start again?

A: At this stage we do not know but are reviewing the situation closely in line with government advice and will only carry out work onsite when it is safe to do so.

We will keep residents updated and they can contact us on 0800 358 3783 or email housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk with any questions.

Q: What about planned works that were due to start onsite in 2020?

A: In line with government advice on social distancing as a result of coronavirus, we are also postponing all planned works that were due to start this year until further notice.

We are contacting residents to let them know and will continue to engage and involve them in future plans, offering support through online consultation and one-to-one calls.

Residents can contact us on 0800 358 3783 or email housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk with any questions and stay updated online through project specific updates available at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing/major-works.

Q: I'm a leaseholder paying for planned works – how will this affect my bills including payments due and made to date?

A: Leaseholders can continue to make advance payments for planned works to their building or choose to stop payments until we write to advise when payments and works are due to restart. All payment term cycles will reset from this point.





Advance payments made by leaseholders to date, for their share of any temporarily suspended planned works, may be refunded or kept on their account for future use.

Leaseholders should contact us on 0800 358 3783 or email housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk with any questions about their bills.

Q: How can I have my say on planned works to my building?

A: Whilst we have temporarily suspended planned works, we are continuing to engage with residents and involve them in plans for their building through our online consultation and one-to-one calls where residents can raise concerns and get answers to their questions.

Residents can also contact us on 0800 358 3783 or email housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk with any questions and stay updated online www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing/major-works.

Paying rent and service charges

Q: I am worried about paying my rent or service charge bills. Can you help?

A: If you're worried or struggling to pay your rent or service charge bills, contact us straight away so we can help. We appreciate that this is a difficult and stressful situation so please keep us informed so we can help.

Utilities

Q: Will plans to allow council-owned buildings and homes to be connected with high-speed internet continue in light of coronavirus, with work being carried out by internet service providers?

A: Yes. More than ever, with social isolation, it is important residents are connected to high speed, low cost internet services within their homes so they can benefit from access to greater opportunities that enhance their experiences and capabilities.

Telecommunications work including provision of internet services is classified as critical within new government regulations and legislation in response to





dealing with coronavirus. We will continue to allow internet service providers to carry out essential only elements of work to connect more homes, on our housing estates with high-speed internet, as far as possible and where safe to do so following latest public health advice. This support our City for All commitment to be one of the best-connected cities with unrivalled internet access and speeds for residents.

Where internet service operators need to enter homes, they and residents should follow the guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK. Internet service providers Community Fibre Ltd, Hyperoptic, Virgin Media and G Network are already carrying out work to connect cables across estates in preparation. There is no cost to residents for this work.

We are contacting residents to let them know in advance, where internet service providers are due to carry out work to connect services in their area and to assure them they do not have to sign up for internet services or allow access into their homes.

Residents can find out more online at www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing/internet and contact us on 0800 358 3783 or email housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk with any questions.

Or access more detailed information in relation to the government's guidance at www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-telecommunications-infrastructure-deployment-in-england.

Cleaning and rubbish

Q: Have you increased communal area cleaning?

A: To slow the spread of the virus and help keep everyone safe, we have increased the cleaning of communal areas including door handles, lifts and switches.

Q: Will the rubbish collection continue as normal?

A: Yes, rubbish services will continue as normal, if your collection is missed please report it online to webforms.westminster.gov.uk/report-missed-waste-collection/.





Halls and community facilities

Q: Will use of housing services managed halls and other community facilities remain available for booking and use?

A: We have closed all of our halls, playgrounds, pitches and youth clubs in line with current government and health service guidelines. We are updating people who had bookings to explain the decision.

Parking permits

Q: How can I get parking permit or parking scratch card?

A: We are now selling visitor parking scratch cards via phone only and sending these out via Royal Mail. Please contact us on 0800 358 3783 and select option 1 to order and make a payment for visitor parking scratch cards.

These will then be posted to your home address. Please allow 5 – 7 working days for visitor parking scratch cards to be delivered.

We are currently working with the parking team to make more efficient and alternative arrangements to obtain permits and will continue to keep residents updated.

In the meantime, please go online to www.westminster.gov.uk/yourhousing/parking to find out more.





Homelessness

Q: Where should people go for help if they are experiencing homelessness in Westminster?

A: In the first instance, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Westminster should call us on 020 7641 1000 or register for help online at www.westminster.gov.uk/homelessness.

Q: Why have you closed your Housing Solutions Service centre to people experiencing homelessness?

A: The Housing Solutions service centre at 82 Bruckner Street remains open by appointment only, from Monday to Friday from 11am to 3pm, to help keep everyone safe and slow the spread of coronavirus.

Appointments can be made by calling 020 7641 1000 and online at www.westminster.gov.uk/homelessness.

The Passage have closed their centre and our Freephone number is listed for use to get help, on their door signage.

**For further information visit
www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus**

