

## Key Headlines

ALL OUR OFFICES ARE NOW CLOSED and will remain closed for the foreseeable future. The easiest way for customers to access our services is via our website, or call us on 0333 200 7304 or email [info@platformhg.com](mailto:info@platformhg.com). As our offices are currently closed contact via post will not be accessed at this time.

### **Platform's Rent Support Team – Helping our customers with benefits and budgeting advice.**

We have a dedicated team of Rent Support Officers who can help our customers check to see if they may be entitled to financial assistance and guide them through the process of making claims. Any of our customers requiring assistance can also email us at [welfarereform@platformhg.com](mailto:welfarereform@platformhg.com) to ask for help.

**Budgeting Advice** - We are advising our customers to start looking at their finances and to make a budget - list everything they spend. Where costs need to be cut, we can point them in the right direction to access further support especially where outgoings include 'non-priority' debts, for free advice, licensed by the Financial Conduct Authority.

**Benefits Advice** - We have produced comprehensive information about what support

Platform Housing can give on our website and via our social media channels for customers seeking benefit advice including the following groups of customers:-

- People who are/ were working
- Off sick
- Furloughed
- Zero hours workers
- Self employed workers
- Caring responsibilities
- Customers already in receipt of benefits

We have also provided the direct link to the official Universal Credit Website.

**Repairs and Maintenance** – We are currently only offering the following repairs service:

**EMERGENCY REPAIRS.** These include:

- Complete loss of electric or exposed bare wires
- Complete loss of water supply or uncontrollable major leaks
- Complete loss of heating
- Complete loss of hot water for vulnerable customers
- Making insecure properties safe
- Lift breakdowns.

To report any emergency repairs customers should call: 0333 200 7304

Any non-emergency repairs already booked with us have been cancelled and will be rearranged at a later date when it is safe to carry out the work, although some void works and grounds maintenance works may still be undertaken where it is safe to do so.

For any of our homes which are under warranty, the relevant developer will also only be carrying out emergency repairs, any others will be picked up at a later date. All 12 month end of defect visits are postponed until further notice.

**STATUTORY AND COMPLIANCE WORKS.** These include:

- Emergency gas repairs and checks
- Health & safety / fire safety checks

**Independent Living and Supported Housing Services** - the safeguarding and ongoing safety and wellbeing of our more vulnerable customers remains one of our top priorities.

We have Business Continuity Plans in place and in operation for all our Independent Living and Supported Housing Schemes.

We have sent letters to all our residents regarding Public Health England and Government advice. This letter also details Platform's approach in respect of helping prevent the spread of Covid-19 and social distancing.

We have also implemented a system of traffic light notices for residents to place on their front doors – I'm Ok / I Need Some Help.

Our current working practices in our Independent Living and Supported Schemes include:

- Replacing where possible, face to face contact with telephone, text messages, face time, emails, letters
- Restricted access to schemes to essential visitors only. Posters on all entrances.
- All activities within communal lounges/shared spaces have been cancelled for the foreseeable future
- All our communal lounges are now closed.
- Guest Rooms no longer available for hire until further notice.
- Catering services are under continuous review, internally run café services have moved to home delivery meals. We are supplying emergency provision boxes delivered by our activities teams.
- Cleaning and infection control measures have been reviewed. Introduced enhanced cleaning regimes, including disinfecting of regular touch points and communal laundry equipment. Cleaning companies also follow touch point cleaning regimes and are being allocated additional hours as required
- Services provided by other providers e.g. hairdressers, beauticians, gym facilities, have been temporarily cancelled.

We are also making attempts to contact all our customers aged 70 years or over that do not live in independent living or supported housing accommodation, and any of our customers whom have already told us about a specific vulnerability, to check on their wellbeing and to see if there is anything that either we can help with or get them in contact with other agencies or community support available during this time.

**Letting our Homes** - Platform will continue to work alongside our key local authority partners ensuring that we make available much needed accommodation for some of the most vulnerable people within society impacted by the Coronavirus. This will include those rough sleeping and other households that are homeless or who face imminent homelessness. Where we identify an urgent case for rehousing we will arrange access for them without the need for any face to face contact

observing all of the social distancing rules. For any urgent requests please speak to one of our Regional Voids and Lettings Managers; Nicola Smitham covering the East region (all of the East Midlands and Lincolnshire) on 07815008057 or Gemma Lawrence covering the West region (all of the West Midlands, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire) on 07773 969849.

**Coronavirus and Domestic Abuse Support** - We know that this is a difficult and challenging time for everyone – but particularly so for adults and children living with domestic abuse and the professionals working hard to support them. We are raising awareness, through our website and through our social media campaigns, of all the National agencies that are there waiting to offer the necessary support and guidance to anyone whom may need it. Public spaces and working remotely can help to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but for many survivors, staying home may not be the safest option.

**Community Support** – Our teams are working hard to ensure that we are identifying organisations such as foodbanks and other external projects and initiatives taking place in our operating areas in response to Covid-19, which may be able to offer help and support to our customers. All our staff will be made aware of these initiatives and will be able to signpost our customers accordingly. Platform have also made a financial contribution to a number of foodbanks across our operating areas.

**Severe Hardship Fund** – Platform Housing have put in place financial resources to support a severe hardship fund for our customers who may be suffering the most severe case of hardship during these exceptional circumstances. This fund is designed to support our work where we come across, as part of our ongoing support to our customers, the most severe cases of hardship and where there are no other means of support. It is a one off financial payment and it is not available for general application.