

Newsletter

Summer 2020 www.paragonha.org.uk

STAY SAFE

The Coronavirus Pandemic has had a massive impact on us all personally, in our communities and the country as a whole. That means it has affected the services we provide to you and how we deliver these. At the time of putting this newsletter together there are still a lot of uncertainties going forward, but we're sharing with you where we are at now and how we are aiming to get services restored.

The first thing we need to say to all our service users – tenants, owners and applicants is a very big **Thank You** for your patience and understanding as we know services have been disrupted. The feedback from our frontline staff is that people have been great and that has encouraged us as we try to keep things going. At the moment all our staff are working from home (and those of you doing the same will know the challenges of that) and some staff are doing some on site working while taking the steps required to keep themselves and others safe.

We have had to set up some new things but in the main our contingency plan swung into action quickly when we had to close the office on 23rd March 2020.



Thank you

We know how frustrating it has been for customers who have had to stay safe at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we would like to thank you for your patience during this time.

We know you, like us, are very keen to get back to some sort of normality and we have been working behind the scenes to help us move as quickly as we can through the route-map phases of lockdown release.

Some services such as grass-cutting, and landscaping are already starting to get back to normal.

In developing our Route-Map out of lockdown, we have been working with our contractors and others to plan what each phase might mean for the services we provide to tenants and other customers. We have also been contacting tenants via a telephone survey being carried out on our behalf by Knowledge Partnership.

In this Newsletter we will cover:

- How to keep in touch with us
- Repairs service status
- Estate Management
- Rents & Benefits
- Investment Programme & Landscape Maintenance
- Route Map to restoring services and your views

Route Map Back

As mentioned on page 1, we are currently working on a route map back to the office and we have tried to mirror the Scottish Government phases. We are hoping that publication of this newsletter in late July / early August will coincide with the transition to Phase 3 of the Route Map.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 | Phase 4 |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Virus Not Yet Contained. | Virus Controlled. | Virus Suppressed. | Virus Remains Suppressed. |



SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ROUTE MAP PHASES

Virus not yet contained but cases are falling. From 28 May you should be able to meet another household outside in small numbers. Sunbathing is allowed, along with some outdoor activities like golf and fishing. Garden centres and drive-through takeaways can reopen, some outdoor work can resume, and childminding services can begin.

Virus is controlled but risk of spreading remains. You can meet larger groups outdoors, and meet another household indoors. Construction, factories, warehouses, laboratories and small shops can resume work. Playgrounds and sports courts can reopen, and professional sport can begin again.

You can meet people from more than one household indoors. Non-essential offices would reopen, along with gyms, museums, libraries, cinemas, larger shops, pubs, restaurants, hairdressers and dentists. Live events could take place with restricted numbers and physical distancing restrictions. Phase 3 being introduced in stages by Scottish Government.

Virus no longer a significant threat. University and college campuses can reopen in full, mass gatherings are allowed. All workplaces open and public transport is back at full capacity.



PHA ROUTE MAP PHASES

- Full home working for majority of staff
- Some essential access to office for work that cannot be done at home – IT / mail handling / essential paperwork
- Some on site working to process voids / essential repairs / essential allocations

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- Pre-return actions completed as per plan
- Return to office / site for staff not in home working priority classification
- Measures in place to ensure safe working in and out of office
- Measures in place for management of customer interaction in and out of office

- Return to pre-lockdown working
- Part of the process of planning for a safe return to the office and out on site is the completion of Risk Assessments and Method Statements detailing how every aspect of staff's working day will be conducted.
- We are working closely with the guidance produced by the Scottish Government, Scottish Federation of Housing Association and Employers in Voluntary Housing to ensure that any risk to staff, tenants and other customers of the Association is as low as possible.



Feedback



It is important to us that we get feedback from tenants on how well you think we have responded to the Covid 19 crisis, and on what you think the priorities should be as we move through the phases of our route map.

We have asked Knowledge Partnership, who previously undertook the Tenant Satisfaction Survey for us, to undertake a telephone survey for us. We have asked them to contact a sample of 400 tenants – across all our schemes and a variety of age profiles



– with a survey looking at if you have contacted us during lock down and if so what your experience was. We're also asking tenants to tell us their priorities. Surveys started on the 6th July. If you have not been contacted by Knowledge Partnership but would like to complete a survey then contact us on **01324 878050 / enquiries@paragonha.org.uk** and we can either email / post a survey out to you or we can arrange a telephone appointment to go through the survey with you.

Sharing Your Views and Keeping You Informed

There is a big challenge facing everyone in getting services restored safely across the whole country – schools, public transport, shops and more. We have produced a “Quick Guide” below which aims to advise you of the current status of services and the route to restoration as we send this newsletter off to print.

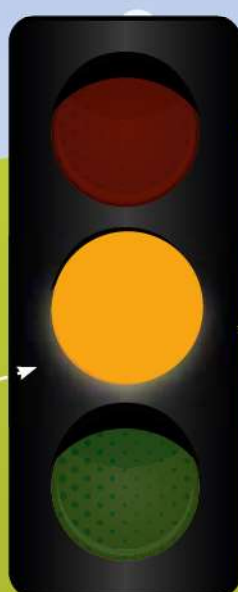
However as you know the situation may change so keep checking with us for updates. Latest information can be found on our website at www.paragonha.org.uk and our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Paragon-Housing-Association-Ltd-102003991471917>.



Services currently ongoing*

- Staff are working mainly from home
Contact us by phone / email or by Facebook private message
- Callout, Emergency and some Urgent Repairs
- Gas Safety Checks and Servicing
- Repairs to empty homes (voids)
- Landscape Maintenance

* All the above undertaken with safety measures in place



Currently running with some restrictions or scheduled to resume late July / August

- Waiting List Applications
- Allocation of Properties on priority basis
- Tenancy Sustainment Help - e.g. help with benefits.
Telephone / email service meantime.
- Internal and External Repairs - moving to full restoration end July / early August. There will be a catch up period so Target Response Times & Right to Repair remain suspended.
- Anti Social Behaviour - telephone / email service.
- Estate/ Close Inspections - moving to service restoration late July / early August. These will be prioritised on a health and safety basis.
- Planned maintenance surveys undertaken to ensure future works are identified and programmed ahead.
- Planned Investment Works - moving to full operation late July / early August.



Service currently restricted

- Office Closed
- No cash or phone payments in office
There are alternative ways to pay - contact us on 01324 878050 for more details
- Home Visits - restricted to urgent visits only

See pages 5 and 6 for info on new measures for working in, or visiting you safely in your home.



Paying your Rent

Although our office is currently closed to the public (with staff working remotely) it is very important that you continue to pay your rent to avoid getting into arrears. Rent continues to be charged on the 29th of each month.

Contact Us

We appreciate that this is a very difficult time for people and that some of you may be worried about paying your rent. We are sympathetic to the difficulties being experienced and urge you to contact us as soon as possible if you are struggling to pay your rent so that we can try to help. Please contact the Tenancy Management team on **01324 878050** or email enquiries@paragonha.org.uk or send us a private message on Facebook.

Claim Early

You may be able to apply for help with your rent from either Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. Entitlement will depend on your income and circumstances. It is important that you claim benefits as soon as you think you may be entitled as your award will only start from your date of claim and can usually only be backdated in very limited circumstances. If you are unsure what to claim, need help to apply, or are having difficulties with your benefit claim then please contact us for help.

The Tenancy Management Team have produced a **Coronavirus Benefits Advice Guide** which you can find on our website www.paragonha.org.uk

If you are unsure what to claim, need help to apply, or are having difficulties with your benefit claim then please contact us for help.

Ways to Pay your Rent

The office is closed so we cannot currently take cash or payments over the phone and we are sorry that this has caused some problems for some of you. Unfortunately this was unavoidable as we were unable to put staff in the office.

Even when we return to the office we will probably still not be fully open to the public and will continue to be unable to take cash payments in person. We are reviewing what we can do. You can still phone or email us for advice. **Please note that our contact number has temporarily changed to 01324 878050.**

If you cannot pay by any of these methods give us a call on **01324 878050** and we will provide further advice.



Standing Order - Please contact us and we will send you out a Standing Order Form which you will need to complete and send to your bank.



Bank Transfer - Please contact us for our Bank Details and we can confirm your rent reference number so any payments are posted to the correct account.



Allpay card - Allpay offers a flexible way to pay rent: in person / by phone / on the internet. You can use your Allpay card in the following ways:



• At any **Post Office or Paypoint**. You can find your nearest payment point by visiting <https://consumer.paypoint.com>.



• **Online** - You can use your Allpay card to make payments securely online. Log on to www.allpayments.net and register if you haven't already done so.



• **By Phone** - Allpay has an automated telephone payment system available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The contact number is **0844 557 8321**. You will be asked to provide your Allpay reference number (on front of card), debit card details and amount you wish to pay.

Please note to use the Allpay payment services, you will need your Allpay card to hand. You will be guided through the process.

Thank you for continuing to make your rent payments on time - if you are experiencing any difficulties then please speak to us.

Repairs

Where safe to do so, we plan to have re-started external and communal repair works from **Monday 20th July**. We have continued to take repair requests for external or communal area repairs during lockdown and aim to clear the back log within 6 – 8 weeks of the restart.

During '**Phase 2**' most of the backlog jobs carried out will be for internal communal areas and external areas. Any high priority works in your home will be carried out only with strict controls and consent.

There is currently a backlog of repairs and ongoing delays in the "supply chain" for some materials. We will order repairs but we may be unable to meet the target completion date. Repair response times and the Right to Repair remain suspended at the moment. We do appreciate your patience and understanding at this challenging time.

When you report a repair we will check whether anyone in your household is self-isolating or demonstrating Coronavirus (COVID

19) symptoms such as coughing or high temperature. Contractors will continue to ensure their operatives use appropriate precautionary personal protective equipment and follow all government safety guidelines.

See the section on working in your home on page 6 for information on what will happen if our staff or our contractors need to attend in your home.

All staff and contractors must keep up-to-date with the latest government health advice, follow good hygiene practice and inform their manager and self-isolate at home if they feel unwell.

We have written to all tenants with more detailed information on restarting of repairs services.

Planned Programme of Works

We are now preparing to resume some planned investment works, initially in external and communal areas.

Planned programme works within your home will be scheduled during **Phases 3 and 4** of the Route Map where possible. Controls will be in place and some works will now be programmed for next year. Contact will be made directly with all affected tenants and owners.

Your safety, and that of our staff and contractors, continues to be of the utmost priority at the moment. Focusing on working safely will help protect all involved.



What you can do to help?

People can be affected differently by rules around lockdown and these change frequently. These cover who you can meet, where they can meet, how often, travel rules, wearing of masks and more - so keep checking on the latest news (the BBC news web site is helpful) and visit the Scottish Government web site for more details: www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19

The current Status of the Scottish Government's Route Map is Phase 3.

KEY ADVICE TO ALL

- Adhere to physical distancing as much as possible
- Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly

Please be considerate towards your neighbours and your community by obeying the lockdown guidance. If you live in a property with shared communal spaces such as closes, common rooms, corridors and back courts then please be mindful of your own safety and that of your neighbours. Only use these space when you have to. Please do not congregate in these spaces.

Our staff and contractors have been instructed about the need to follow the rules when they are on site and we would ask you to do the same when they are working in and around your home.

We are able to offer advice and guidance to customers and their families regarding the need to physically distance but we are not in a position to enforce these guidelines. Enforcement is the responsibility of the local police and we are working closely with them.





Visiting you in your home

This is a short explanation of how we are working to ensure we and our contractors can enter your home safely if we need to.

Before We Visit We Will

Phone and ask you a few simple questions before coming to see you:

1. Are you or any members of your family displaying symptoms of Coronavirus, such as high temperature, new persistent cough, or loss of taste or smell?
2. Are you or any of your family considered vulnerable or have you been self-isolating?
3. Are you happy for us to enter your home and do you understand that we may need further access within it?

It is important that you remember to inform us of any change in circumstances before the date we are coming to see you.

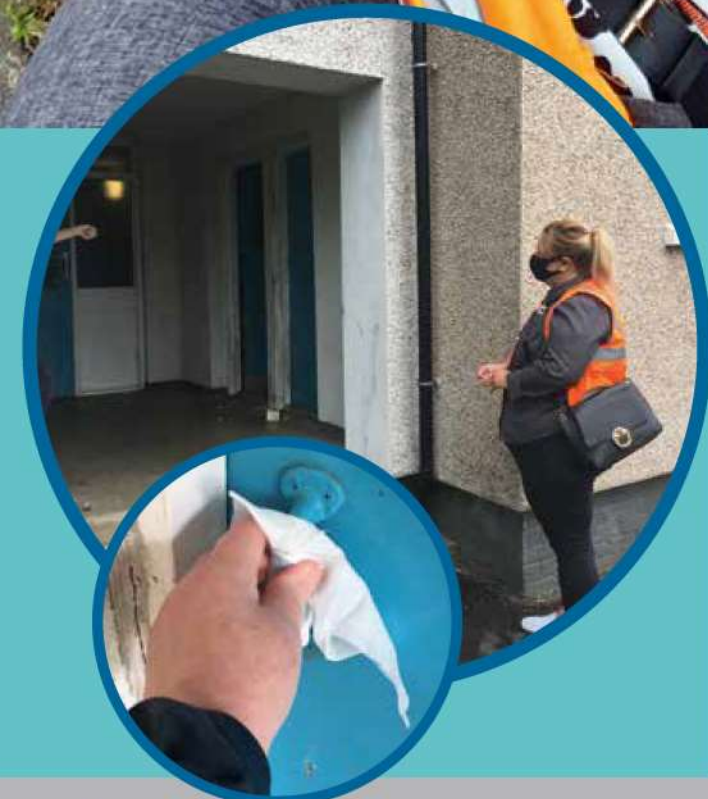
If Possible You Should

1. Leave all internal doors open.
2. Leave windows open for ventilation.
3. Keep clear pathways within the home, and free of any obstructions.
4. Keep all areas well-lit and open window coverings.
5. Where possible other occupants of the house should vacate the property and stay together in one area such as the driveway or garden or, congregate in one other room.
6. Shut pets away safely within another room.

During Our Visit

1. We will ask questions from a safe distance and where possible will do this from outside of the property.
2. We will wash or sanitise our hands before and after every home we visit.
3. We may wear face coverings and WILL wear face coverings if you ask us to
4. To minimise the time we spend within your home, we will try to complete our notes and forms outside of your property.
5. We will take care to keep our own clothes clean during visits and will wash or dispose of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as required.

STAY
 SAFE



Investment Programme



When lockdown commenced in March 2020 work on site was stopped to ensure that tenants and site staff were not being put at risk and we followed the Scottish Government Guidance.

Following the Scottish Government's announcement at the beginning of July that we are moving to Phase 3 of their Route Map for service restoration including construction, we are working with contractors to get them back on site and working safely. We know there have been delays for people in getting works done in their homes and we appreciate your understanding on this.

We have asked contractors to submit Risk Assessment Method Statements (RAMS) for consideration and approval by our Health & Safety Consultant before we allow commencement of works on site including in tenants' homes.

We have already received some contractors' RAMS and these are currently being reviewed and we expect these to be in line with the requirements of the Social Housing Resilience Group "Guide to Re-starting Service" as well as the "Public Health Scotland Covid Guidance".

We will have a start-up meeting before each project restarts and have asked contractors to ensure that all tenants are provided with minimum 7 days-notice of works to commence. We will put information on to our website and Facebook page.

If you have any questions or concerns please email message on Facebook or phone, and the Programme and Regeneration Team will get back to you.

Projects due to restart

- Electrical Upgrade inc Fire & Carbon Monoxide Detectors (FCMD)
- Gas Boiler & Systems Replacements
- Sanitaryware
- Painterwork
- Planned Maintenance Surveys

There are lots of ways to get involved!

Engagement

During 2019/20 we had been preparing, in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council, to consult on and develop a new Tenant Participation Strategy. As with so many things Coronavirus has come along and put the breaks on things.

Tenant Participation remains central to the services Paragon provides with the Association believing that tenants and other service users should be able to decide on:

- The issues they wish to be involved in
- The level at which they wish to be involved, and
- Whether or not they want to be involved as individuals or groups.

For this reason we have decided to create, in consultation, with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, a 1 year 'holding' strategy that will explore the potential for digital participation and consultation replacing (at least temporarily) the more usual face to face events.

The expectation is that the strategy will be approved by the Association's Management Committee in September. If you would like to see a copy of the draft strategy or are interested in getting involved in Tenant Participation or Scrutiny then please contact Evelyn Mathershaw, Housing Manager on **01324 878050** or email enquiries@paragonha.org.uk

For further details on how to be involved in Tenant Participation or Scrutiny Panel contact Evelyn Mathershaw, Housing Manager on **01324 878050** or email enquiries@paragonha.org.uk

Contacting us

We hope everyone stays safe and well during the lockdown but if you need us, we are here to help.



The office is currently closed and we are mainly providing services remotely.

BY PHONE - If you phone the office number on 01324 664966 you will get a detailed message on what to do to contact us. **Please listen to the full message.**

You can phone us direct on **01324 878050** - we have put in additional lines to increase our capacity off site.

This number operates 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and there are 5 lines but as the phone is on a divert system, it may take longer to answer - please bear with us at this time.

If you don't need to speak with us directly you can contact us in the following ways or you can request we call you back - remember to tell us who you are, where you live and your phone number.

EMAIL - enquiries@paragonha.org.uk

PRIVATE FACEBOOK MESSAGE

– Paragon Housing Association Limited – <https://www.facebook.com/Paragon-Housing-Association-Ltd-102003991471917>. This is our official Facebook Page - please make sure you message us on this page or we can't get back to you.



Services are being provided but there is disruption. You can report repairs to us and we will take note of them, but depending on the priority, we may not be able to do these until lockdown is lifted - but please keep reporting so you are on the list.

What to do in a property emergency during the Coronavirus Pandemic

EMERGENCY - If an emergency situation arises that affects your property please get in touch - for example you have a fire or flood.

• **OFFICE HOURS** - If it is during our opening times (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday excluding public holidays) - call us on **01324 878050** and our staff will help with arranging repairs and other support.

• **OUT OF HOURS** - Out with these times call the out of hours number **0800 975 1234** and details will be passed to the Duty Manager for assessment if the situation is of a more serious nature. Police Scotland, the Fire Service Scotland and the 3 Forth Valley Local Authorities have been notified of details of our call out arrangements.



GAS - Always call National Gas Emergencies at any time if you suspect a Gas Leak – **0800 111 999**

If your property is affected we will do what we can to help you stay in your home or ensure you have alternative accommodation and support.

REPAIRS

Emergency repairs such as flooding and communal lighting will be carried out. Report them by phone or email immediately. External repairs are now being booked in where safe to do so.

Urgent repairs (such as leaks which were containable) backlogs, from before and during lockdown, and routine repairs will be booked in when safe to do so.

We appreciate your patience and we will work to clear the repair backlog but please keep reporting your repairs to us.

IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE

Grounds maintenance such as grass cutting has already restarted.

Gas safety checks remain a safety priority. Some outdoor maintenance and improvement jobs can now be completed such as external decoration and roofing work where needed.



MOVING HOME

We are re-letting properties on a phased basis. Lettings are being done in a responsible socially distanced manner with priority going to homeless households.

There are no mutual exchanges for now due to social distancing. This will be reviewed on 3rd August.

RENT PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS

If you are worried about falling behind with your rent because of financial hardship caused by the Coronavirus outbreak, please get in touch as soon as possible. The Tenancy Management Team can support you with welfare benefits, and advise on other options. Please call us on **01324 878050** or email enquiries@paragonha.org.uk.

CONTACT US

Customer service continues to be provided digitally and by telephone. Please contact us, email enquiries@paragonha.org.uk or call **01324 878050**.

Appointments: If you have an appointment or need to book a repair, please tell us if you are self-isolating, shielding or if someone in your household has covid symptoms.



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SHR Registration Number: HAL 298
Scottish Charity No: SC 036262
Property Factor Registration No: PF000282