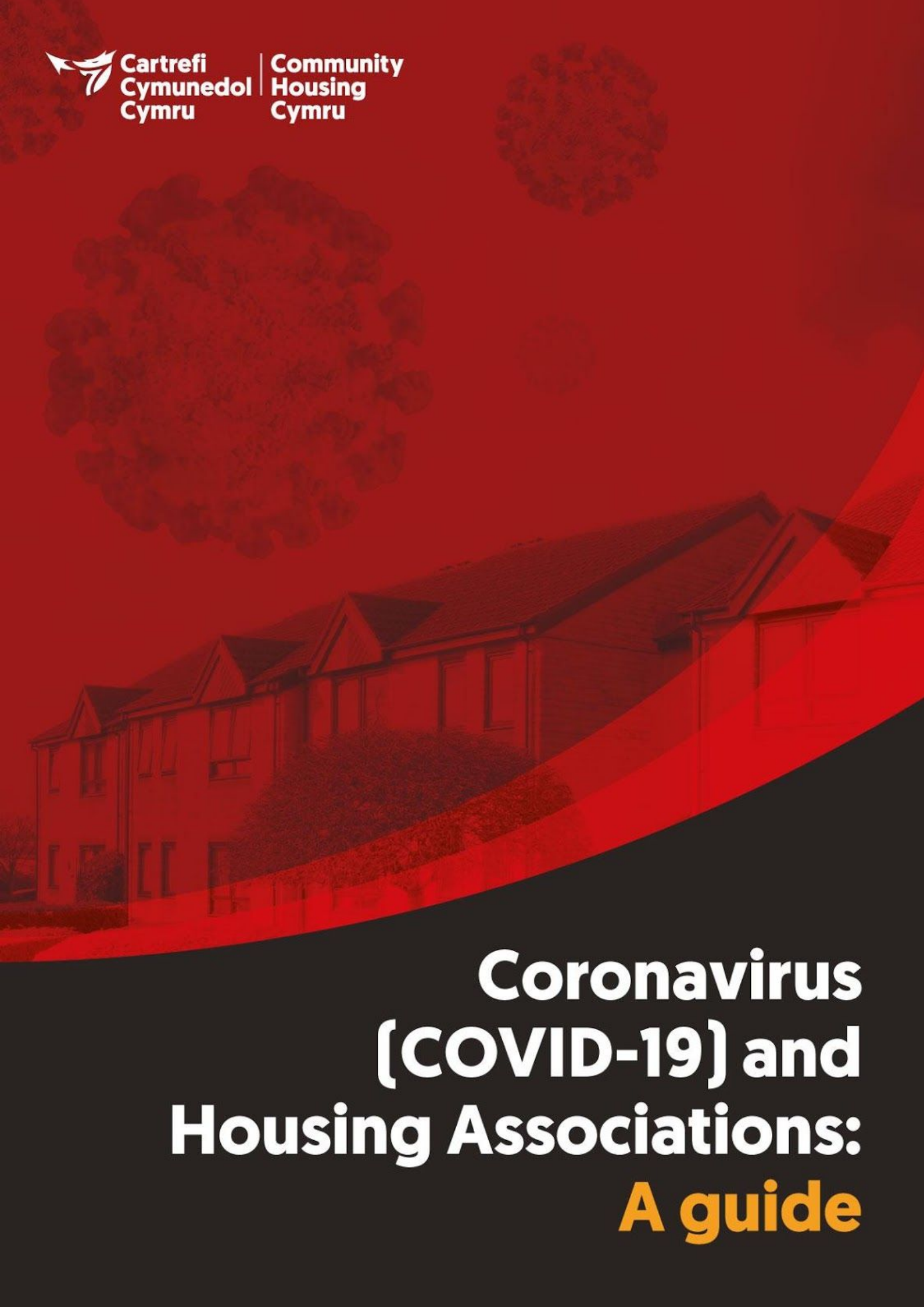




**Cartrefi
Cymunedol
Cymru**

**Community
Housing
Cymru**



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Housing Associations: A guide



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

Updated: 1600hrs 5th June 2020

New or amended information to the previous release is highlighted in green

Contents (hyperlinks)

#	Section	Includes
1	Context & key updates	This resource; Reporting of cases & deaths ; Legislation
2	Core & regularly updated guidance	Public Health Wales; UK Government; Welsh Government ; Care Inspectorate Wales; Social Care Wales
3	Communication	With tenants; With sector colleagues; With the public
4	Staff & employment	Furloughing Testing of critical workers Social distancing in the workplace Cases of/exposure of workforce to COVID-19 DBS checks during recruitment
5	Care & support services	Social care Personal Protective Equipment Supported accommodation
6	Funding & financial support for HAs	Loan & grant package Flexibility in grant & funding processes
7	Welfare & Universal Credit	New Universal Credit Claims Recovery of benefit overpayments Landlord Portal; Housing Queries Routeway
8	Tenancies & evictions	Guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities Evictions (including community safety & domestic violence)
9	Homelessness	Delivery of homeless & substance misuse services Local authority support for rough sleepers Care and support for people who are homeless
10	Tenants	Supporting & delivering services to tenants Violence prevention Vulnerable tenants Communal spaces
11	Safety & compliance	Health & Safety Executive Flexibility in compliance due to access restrictions Gas safety Fire safety
12	Contact	



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

1. Context and key updates

This resource

This resource has been created for housing associations to support with their preparations around, and response to, the outbreak of COVID-19. We hope it will also help HAs to form guidance for their own audiences including tenants. Please note this resource is a consolidation of official guidance, and is not guidance created by CHC.

Reporting of COVID-19 cases & deaths

Public Health Wales

- Report daily on confirmed COVID-19 cases and suspected COVID-19 deaths in Wales
- These figures include any report to PHW of a death in a **hospitalised patient or care home resident** where COVID-19 has been confirmed with a positive test and the clinician suspects this was a causative factor in the death.
- As of 1400hrs on 5th June 2020, there were 14,314 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Wales
- As of 1400hrs on 5th June 2020, there have been 1,383 suspected COVID-19 deaths in Wales.

UK Government

- Report daily on confirmed cases and deaths in the UK
- Include deaths in **all settings**, not just in hospitals (as was reported until 29th April)
- Provide figure under new and old measure
- As of 0900hrs on 5th June 2020, a total of 283,311 people have tested positive for the virus in the UK
- As of 1700 on 4th June 2020, of those who tested positive in the UK, 40,261 have died. This new figure includes deaths across all settings.

Welsh Government & Care Inspectorate Wales

- Each Tuesday, a weekly statistical release shows the **provisional counts of deaths in care homes**
- These figures are based on statutory notifications by care home providers to CIW
- The location of death may be in the care home, in hospital or another location
- Between 1st March and 29th May 2020
 - CIW has been notified of 668 care home resident deaths with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. This makes up 25% of all reported deaths
 - 291 of these were reported as confirmed and 377 as suspected COVID-19
 - Of the suspected and confirmed COVID-19 deaths, 69% were located in the care home and 27% were located in the hospital



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

[Office of National Statistics](#)

- Each Tuesday, a weekly publication shows the provisional number of deaths registered in England and Wales, which now includes **[separate counts of deaths involving COVID-19](#)**
- This data shows provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available. It shows deaths outside of hospital, including in care homes
- The ONS have written a [blog post](#) summarising their figures compared with other datasets.
- In the [week ending 22nd May 2020 \(Week 21\)](#)
 - The provisional number of deaths registered in England & Wales was 12,288 This was 2,285 lower than Week 20, but 2,348 more than the five-year average.
 - Of the deaths registered in England & Wales, 2,589 (21.1%) mentioned COVID-19. This is a decrease of 1,221 deaths compared with Week 20.
 - In Wales, there were 134 deaths registered involving COVID-19, accounting for 19.4% of all deaths registered that week.

Legislation (Welsh Government)

[Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace: Guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020, 12th May.](#)

[First Minister of Wales' Written Statement - Review of lock down measures, 29th May](#)

On 29th May the First Minister [announced changes to the lock down measures](#), that will come into force from Monday 1st June. From then, people from two different households in the same local area will be able to meet up so long as they are outdoors and they maintain strict 2 metre social distancing and hand hygiene. This follows the third statutory three week review of the regulations required by the Welsh Government.

To reflect changes in the [Coronavirus legislation and guidance on the law](#), amendments have been made to the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) (30th May).

Welsh Government previously laid a [Statutory Instrument](#) which details enforcement of restrictions on movement and gatherings, and published [Q&A style guidance](#) to support individuals and organisations in complying with this.

Legislation (UK Government)

The Coronavirus Act is emergency legislation to respond to the outbreak, and was passed by UK Government in March. It empowers Welsh Government to act in a range of areas, including:

- Increasing the availability of staff for the health and care sectors



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

- Relaxation of regulation in the NHS, care sector and beyond
- The power to close schools and compel them to remain open to the children of key workers
- Powers to slow the spread of the virus through restricting movement

The Act includes provisions extending the notice period for the majority of Notices Seeking Possession to three months across the majority of tenancy types. The Judiciary has suspended all new and existing eviction proceedings in court for 90 days, from 27th March (more details below).

2. Core & regularly updated guidance

[The Senedd Research Service Coronavirus timeline: Welsh and UK governments' response](#). This timeline highlights key developments in Wales and the UK in response to COVID-19, and will be updated weekly.

[Daily statement from Public Health Wales](#)

- Latest position regarding testing and response to the virus

[Key information and resources from Public Health Wales on COVID-19](#)

- [Information for healthcare professionals](#)
- [Resources](#) including social media videos and public information posters

[Welsh Government resources](#) (updated regularly)

- [Fines increased for repeat coronavirus lockdown breaches in Wales, 20th May](#). The maximum fine for repeated breaches of the coronavirus lockdown rules in Wales will rise from £120 to £1,920.
- [Coronavirus key \(critical\) workers, updated 18th May](#). Now explicitly includes hostel workers and those working with vulnerable groups. This guidance covers the following:
 - Health and social care workers
 - Public safety (emergency workers) and national security workers
 - Local and national government workers
 - Education and childcare workers
 - Food and other necessary goods workers
 - Transport workers
 - Utilities, communication and financial services workers
 - Key public service workers
- [Testing eligibility, home tests and testing centres, 18th May](#)
- [Test Trace Protect strategy, 13th May](#).
 - With lockdown measures eased from 1st June, the [Test, Trace and Protect strategy](#) has now been rolled out across Wales. Anyone who has a positive coronavirus test result will be contacted by a team of contact tracers and asked for details of everyone they have had close contact with while they have had symptoms.



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

- On 2nd June, [guidance was issued for employers](#) on the Test, Trace and Protect strategy (Updated 4th June).
- [Guidance for symptoms and self-isolation for contact tracing, 5th June](#)
- [Extension of testing to all care home residents and staff in Wales, 16th May](#). This policy will be in addition to the existing arrangements that test:
 - all residents and staff of care homes with ongoing cases prior to May
 - all residents and staff members of care homes reporting an outbreak
 - all residents and staff in the larger care homes in particular with more than 50 beds
 - all individuals being discharged from hospital to live in care homes regardless of whether or not they were admitted to hospital with COVID-19
 - all people who are being transferred between care homes and for new admissions from the community
- [Verifying death in times of emergency, 15th May](#). Guidance for verifying death outside of hospitals during the coronavirus emergency period.
- [Unlocking our society and economy: continuing the conversation, 15th May](#). In this roadmap, Welsh Government outline the steps they are considering:
 - *Explain where we are now in terms of preparing to lift restrictions.*
 - *Set out how we will review any changes we wish to make to the restrictions.*
 - *Outline our proposed 'traffic light' approach to lifting lockdown.*
 - *Indicate how we propose to develop further guidance*
- [Leading Wales out of the Coronavirus Pandemic, 24th April](#). This framework for recovery sets out a three-stage process and seven tests through which the lockdown measures can begin to be lifted, and will help the Welsh Government decide when the time is right to start lifting the existing stay-at-home restrictions.
- Other resources include:
 - [Weekly update on the number of people tested for coronavirus in Wales, 12th May](#)
 - [Social distancing: staying at home and away from others, 21st May](#)
 - [Social distancing: self isolation guidance, 28th May](#)
 - [Education sector:](#)

In a [statement](#) made on 3rd June, Education Minister Kirsty Williams MS announced proposals for the next phase for schools, beginning 29th June. On the same day, the Welsh Government also issued guidance on the [latest understanding of COVID-19 with respect to children and education](#).
 - [Social, community and residential care sector](#)
 - [Businesses and employers](#) (including support for third sector)
 - [Housing](#) (including supported housing)
 - [Health guidance for social landlords: What social landlords need to do if there is a case of coronavirus at a property](#)
 - [Social landlords housing regulation guidance: how social landlords will be regulated during the coronavirus outbreak](#)



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

[UK Government COVID-19 resources](#) (updated regularly) (many UK Government resources are available in a range of languages)

- general information (if not available through Welsh Government resources)
- additional guidance (if not available through Welsh Government resources)

[Care Inspectorate Wales have a dedicated COVID-19 section](#) on their website, where they regularly share updates, guidance and [FAQs](#).

Social Care Wales have shared a number of [coronavirus-related resources](#) on their website, including those to help support staff & carers, adults & older people and children & young people. On 27th April, they released a [resource to support the health and well-being of social care workers during the coronavirus pandemic](#) (last updated 1st June).

3. [Communication](#)

The contents of this document should provide content for communications and will be updated regularly. We will also be sharing up to date UK Government and Public Health Wales guidance from our CHC Twitter handle (@CHCymru).

With tenants

When developing questions for tenants prior to contact with staff, housing associations may wish to have regard to a combination of the [new guidance on self-isolation](#) and, additionally for travel questions, the [withdrawn guidance on returning travellers](#).

UK Government have issued the following guidance documents in a range of languages, including Welsh, Arabic, Polish, Portuguese and Urdu:

- [Guidance on social distancing and vulnerable people](#) [WITHDRAWN 1st May and replaced with [Staying alert and safe social distancing](#)]
- [Guidance on self-isolation](#)
- [Guidance for shielding extremely vulnerable people](#)

With sector colleagues

Community Housing Cymru has formed a specific [Yammer group](#) for the sharing of information on approaches to the COVID-19 outbreak. This group is accessible by staff nominated by each member housing association. If you would like access to this group, please ask permission from your chief executive, and then contact Bryony Haynes on bryony-haynes@chcymru.org.uk. An additional shared resource exists with access for nominated staff from each housing association to detail their response to the outbreak.



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

For communications colleagues, the [PR Strategic Delivery Group](#) is being utilised to share practice. If you would like to join this group please contact Rebecca Goodhand on rebecca-goodhand@chcymru.org.uk.

With the public

Here is an [example of public communication from a housing association](#) aimed at consolidating existing guidance for the public as well as tenants.

4. **Staff & employment**

Furloughing

[HMRC guidance on furloughing staff through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#).

[Furloughing update, 29th May](#)

The next steps of the furloughing scheme have been confirmed by the UK Government, until the end of October 2020.

From 1st July, employers can bring back to work employees that have previously been furloughed for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim CJRS grant for their normal hours not worked. When claiming the CJRS grant for furloughed hours, employers will need to report and claim for a minimum period of a week.

The scheme will close to new entrants from 30th June. From this point onwards, employers will only be able to furlough employees that they have furloughed for a full 3 week period prior to 30th June.

This means that the final date by which an employer can furlough an employee for the first time will be 10th June, in order for the current 3 week furlough period to be completed by 30th June. Employers will have until 31st July to make any claims in respect of the period to 30 June. Further guidance on flexible furloughing and how employers should calculate claims will be published on 12th June.

Online training

Welsh Government has [given furloughed workers access to informal e-learning provision](#) through websites such as Working Wales and Careers Wales. The e-learning provision on offer is aimed at supporting individuals to update skills, maintain mental health and help them think about future careers options.

Testing of critical workers



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

Welsh Government [Cabinet Statement](#): expansion in testing eligibility and critical worker website for home tests, 18th May.

[Coronavirus key \(critical\) workers, updated 18th May](#)

- Health and social care workers
- Public safety (emergency workers) and national security workers
- Local and national government workers
- Education and childcare workers
- Food and other necessary goods workers
- Transport workers
- Utilities, communication and financial services workers
- Key public service workers

Childcare for critical workers

On 6th April, Welsh Government [launched a coronavirus childcare assistance scheme](#) to support Wales' critical workers. This means that parents doing jobs critical to Wales' response to coronavirus will get free childcare during the pandemic. Julie Morgan AM, Deputy Minister for Health & Social Services, has issued a [Written Statement on this new childcare offer](#). Detailed guidance has been issued for both [parents](#) and [providers](#).

Social distancing in the workplace

[Coronavirus regulations: guidance on what businesses can and cannot do during the outbreak, updated 1st June.](#)

New regulations requiring reasonable action to ensure social distancing in the workplace have come into force. Welsh Government has published [guidance](#) (updated 12th May) and [supplementary guidance](#) (14th April) to support organisations to comply with these regulations.

CHC have published a [briefing on the regulations and their impact on housing associations](#)

Cases of COVID-19/exposure of your workforce to Coronavirus

[Welsh Government guidance](#) for businesses and employers lays out what to do if a member of staff is believed to have contracted the virus or staff have been in contact with a case. This includes:

- Somebody becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19
- Somebody with suspected COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace
- Somebody with confirmed COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace
- When individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

If the setting is social, community or residential care, [separate guidance is available](#).

We note that [guidance for individuals returning from affected countries](#) has been withdrawn by Welsh and UK Governments. This is in favour of the new [universal guidance on self-isolation if symptoms are present](#). However, housing associations may wish to continue to have regard to the withdrawn guidance, which is still visible, in addition to the new guidance.

DBS checks during recruitment

In response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the Home Office and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) have put temporary arrangements in place to provide DBS checks and fast-track emergency checks of the Adults' and Children's Barred Lists free-of-charge. Information on these temporary arrangements can be found [here](#).

5. Care & support services

Social care

Care home staff to receive £500 extra payment

First Minister Mark Drakeford confirmed on 5th June that the one off £500 payment for care home and domiciliary care workers will be extended to ancillary staff (e.g. kitchen staff and cleaners) and nursing staff working in care homes.

The Welsh Government will start making these payments this month and are working with the UK Government and HMRC to try to ensure that every penny of the payment reaches people's pockets.

[Welsh Government: Care home testing guidance, 27th May](#). Covid-19 PCR testing in care homes - managing residents and staff who test positive for Covid-19 and reporting arrangements.

[Public Health Wales: Guidance to prevent COVID-19 and manage cases & outbreaks in residential care settings in Wales, 7th May](#)

[Social Care Wales: resources for those supporting people with dementia during Covid-19 \(updated regularly\)](#)

[LTC Covid: International examples of measures to prevent and manage COVID-19 outbreaks in residential care and nursing home settings, 2nd May](#)

[Announcement regarding the extension of coronavirus testing in care homes, 2nd May](#).

[Statement regarding COVID-19 and BAME communities: measures to protect the Health and Social Care workforce, 2nd May](#).



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

[Welsh Government - COVID-19 hospital discharge service requirements, updated 19th May](#)

[Summary of what Welsh Government are doing to support the social care workforce through the pandemic, 29th April.](#)

[Welsh Government - Ethical values and principles for healthcare delivery framework, 30th April.](#)

Guidance for healthcare services when making decisions during the coronavirus outbreak.

There is a dedicated Welsh Government inbox for any specific inquiries relating to the delivery of social care and COVID-19:

- SocialCareCoordination@gov.wales / CydgysylltuGofalCymdeithasol@llyw.cymru
- If appropriate, please copy rhea-stevens@chymru.org.uk into any queries to assist with our tracking.

[Welsh Government - parking pass and concessions for COVID -19 health, care and volunteer workers, 6th April](#)

- This pass provides evidence of entitlement to free parking for those on duty as an NHS staff member, health and social care worker or NHS Volunteer.

[Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales \(ADSS Cymru\) weekly update for care providers.](#)

[Guidance note: support for commissioned providers, 30th March](#)

- For local authority commissioners
- Co-produced by ADSS Cymru, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Social Care Wales (SCW), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Welsh Government
- Designed to summarise pressures on social care providers in Wales arising from COVID-19, and to put forward ways in which commissioners can alleviate these pressures.

[CIW bulletin on changes to the registration requirements for urgent new provision and pre-employment requirements for care staff.](#)

Personal Protective Equipment

[Welsh Government note outlining the steps they are taking to ensure people have the PPE that they need, updated 19th May.](#)

[Revised guidance concerning the use of PPE by health and social care workers, updated 21st May](#)

- Issued jointly by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Public Health Wales (PHW), Public Health Agency (PHA) Northern Ireland, Health Protection Scotland (HPS), Public Health England and NHS England as official guidance
- Supersedes previous PPE guidance



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

- Welsh Government Health Minister, Vaughan Gething AM, published a [written statement](#) on these revised UK-wide PPE guidelines
- Key changes include:
 - new tables explaining the type of PPE that should be worn in various settings to meet safety levels - including where patients do not have suspected/confirmed COVID-19
 - advice on risk assessments on PPE use
 - secondary, primary and community care workers should wear a surgical mask when dealing with vulnerable patients
- Additional guidance has been issued by Public Health England:
 - [Infection Prevention and Control \(IP&C\)](#)
 - PPE for [aerosol generating procedures \(AGPs\)](#) and [non-aerosol generating procedures](#)
 - [Working safely in care homes](#)
- Public Health Wales have issued further advisory notes:
 - [Implementation of the Infection Prevention & Control PPE guidance, 8th April](#)
 - [Supplementary advice on the use of PPE in social care, 9th April](#)
 - [PPE in housing, health, social care and supporting settings, 20th April](#)

Supported Accommodation

[Welsh Government guidance for providers of accommodation for survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence \(VAWDASV\), updated 18th May.](#)

[Welsh Government guidance for providers in supported accommodation settings](#), outlining how they should manage their settings during the coronavirus outbreak.

This guidance is for local authorities and providers involved in delivering supported living accommodation and sets out the need to put practical measures in place to:

- Ensure that those living and working in supported accommodation settings:
- have the support, resources and policies needed to protect themselves.
- have access to the facilities that enable them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene and isolation.
- Mitigate the risk of infection within supported accommodation settings.

6. [Funding & financial support for housing associations](#)

Loan & grant package

[Welsh Government have released information on a £500m loan and grant package for businesses and charities across Wales.](#)



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

This is additional to the UK Government schemes supporting the self-employed and furloughing scheme for employers.

Flexibility in grant & funding processes

We are working with Welsh Government to confirm the situation with regards to ongoing and future grant and funding processes.

We have raised specific issues including:

- The need to suspend wet signatures on applications
- Relaxation of monitoring for certain grants (including Housing Support Grant)

7. Welfare & Universal Credit

New Universal Credit Claims

The DWP have advised that people making new claims for Universal Credit [will no longer need to call the Department as part of the process](#).

Increase in Working Tax Credits

[Working Tax Credits payments will be increased from 6 April 2020](#), as one of a number of changes to welfare benefits announced by UK Government earlier this year. More detail can be found in our recent [welfare briefing](#).

Recovery of benefit overpayments

On 3rd April, the Department for Work and Pensions announced it had [temporarily paused the recovery of benefit overpayments for three months](#), in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Deductions for the recovery of Universal Credit and legacy benefit overpayments, Social Fund loans and Tax Credit debts will be paused. The recovery of Advances by deduction from Universal Credit payments will continue.

The majority of deductions will be suspended automatically. However, tenants should contact their bank to cancel repayment arrangements if they currently make repayments through a Bank Standing Order, Bank Giro Credit or through online banking.

Landlord Portal

On 25th March, the DWP issued a note to landlords using the Landlord Portal Service:



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

In order to help Landlords implement their own business continuity arrangements in response to the current UK Government advice on Coronavirus (COVID19); we have removed the current IP address restrictions relating to the Landlord Portal. Please note the following:

- *As landlords, you are responsible for controlling access to your own Portal. You should regularly review who currently has access to the Portal and their user roles/permissions*
- *Review of user roles by any Portal User who has the Manage Users role assigned to them (usually the Primary or Deputy Primary User) and is accessible via the Users tab at the top of the portal home screen*
- *Removal of the IP address restrictions does not guarantee you will be able to access the portal. If you experience any issues you should speak to your own IT departments in the first instance*
- *If you have any questions please contact:*
TP-LP.ACCOUNTMANAGERTEAM@DWP.GOV.UK

Housing Queries Routeway

The DWP have issued an online resource as a first port of call for queries around Universal Credit, entitled [Universal Credit: Housing Queries Routeway](#).

8. Tenancies & evictions

Guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities

On 1st June, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government issued updated [landlord and tenant guidance, alongside updated guidance for local authorities on enforcement action and a change to the technical guidance on evictions](#).

Whilst this is UK Government guidance applying mostly to England, some of the measures referred to also apply in Wales. You can find guidance from the Welsh Government [here](#).

Evictions (including community safety & domestic violence)

In an [announcement on the evening of 26th March](#), the Judiciary took the decision to suspend all court action relating to evictions from the 27th March. This suspension will last for 90 days, initially, with the potential for extension. This action is in addition to the changes laid out in the Coronavirus Act 2020. A full briefing on the Act is available from CHC.

CHC are working closely with the WLGA to ensure that alternative services and provisions are available to tackle domestic violence during the period where eviction of perpetrators will not be possible.



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

9. **Homelessness**

Delivery of homeless & substance misuse services

[Welsh Government guidance on managing challenging and anti-social behaviour in temporary accommodation, 21st May](#). The guidance is also applicable in other services such as hostels and supported accommodation), and is accompanied by two decision flowcharts.

[Welsh Government guidance for substance misuse and homelessness services, updated 7th May](#).

This guidance covers:

- Day services for both substance misuse services and people who are homeless
- Community treatment services for substance misuse
- People with co-occurring conditions
- Community services for people who are homeless
- Hostels and temporary accommodation, including night shelters and houses of multiple occupation for these client groups
- Housing First projects
- Substance misuse outreach services, including mobile services
- Homelessness outreach services, including mobile units and soup runs
- Residential rehabilitation services
- Community drug and alcohol services

If you have any queries relating to this guidance please contact will-henson@chcymru.org.uk.

Local authority support for rough sleepers

[Welsh Government has released guidance on co-ordinated support for rough sleepers during this crisis](#).

Housing and Local Government Minister Julie James has announced new funding of up to £20m to help ensure that no-one in emergency shelter during the coronavirus crisis has to return to the streets or unsuitable accommodation.

Care and support for people who are homeless

[Welsh Government announce new £20m fund to transform homelessness services and ensure no-one need return to rough sleeping](#), 28th May.

[Continuing to support homeless people during the coronavirus pandemic: local authority guidance](#)



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

On 3rd June, guidance was published to assist local authorities and their partners in developing phase 2 plans to help plan how to support and house those who are homeless but have been given shelter during the coronavirus pandemic.

10. Tenants

Supporting & delivering services to tenants affected by COVID-19

[Tool for frontline staff: support available to tenants living in Wales, 21st May](#). This guidance explains how tenants can get help to pay rent and bills and how to apply during the coronavirus pandemic.

[Repairs to your rented home during the coronavirus pandemic, 15th May](#). Welsh Government guidance outlining what tenants should do if they are self-isolating, or share their home with others, and their home needs to be repaired.

On 28th April, Welsh Government released [guidance for dealing with people who are unwilling or unable to self-isolate or follow coronavirus lockdown instructions](#) (updated 29th May).

Welsh Government has issued [guidance for tenants renting in both private and social housing in Wales](#), and have asked that this guidance is shared as widely as possible. This is to ensure that tenants have the right information in order to act quickly and put measures in place which will improve their physical and emotional well-being during the crisis, but also to prevent housing issues escalating in the months following Covid-19. Julie James AM, Minister for Housing and Local Government, has released an accompanying [Written Statement](#), outlining support available for tenants and highlighting the work carried out by public, private and third sector organisations operating across Wales.

We are working with Welsh Government and the HSE to obtain developed guidance on the delivery of services to tenants' homes. Currently, the [guidance for social, community or residential care](#) may provide interim advice. [UK Government advice on home care visits](#) provides some transferable guidance.

Welsh Government has issued guidance for social landlords outlining [what to do if there is a case of COVID-19 at a property](#).

An example of guidance produced by a housing association for staff visiting homes is available in our [Yammer group](#).

Violence prevention

The [Wales Violence Prevention Unit](#) is monitoring the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and various forms of violence and abuse, including how the outbreak is adversely impacting levels of



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

violence in the home. As part of their [Information Hub](#), the VPU has also developed a suite of materials to support professionals and service providers.

Protecting tenants who are extremely vulnerable

In April, all those identified as being at a very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (due to a serious underlying health issue) received a shielding letter from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales.

On 31st May the Chief Medical Officer for Wales updated his advice to those who are shielding. From 1st June the advice allowed unlimited exercise outdoors, and also indicated that those shielding could meet with members of one other household outdoors, as long as strict physical distancing and hygiene practices are adhered to. These changes, whilst modest, were a significant change for those who are shielding, some of whom had not left their homes for over 10 weeks.

It was [announced on 4th June](#) that almost 130,000 people will start receiving letters from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales setting out the latest advice to protect them from coronavirus.

They will be asked to continue shielding until 16 August, but the letter will also describe how the medical advice has changed to enable them to go outdoors to meet other people for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

- [Written Statement from Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services: Shielding update, 1st June](#)
- [Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus, updated 1st June](#)
- [Written Statement from Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services: Shielding update - Shielding after 15 June, 4th June](#)
- [CMO letter to extremely vulnerable people: support explained](#)

We note that records for shielding letters are unlikely to be complete, and so housing associations may wish to have regard to guidance on protection measures when communicating with and supporting their tenants.

Managing isolation in schemes with communal spaces

[Welsh Government guidance for social, community or residential care settings](#) lays out guidance for the isolation of residents in these settings. In lieu of guidance for other settings, this guidance could be considered.

Latest UK Government guidance on [social distancing](#) and [self-isolation](#) should also be considered.

11. **Safety and compliance**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) share [regular updates on their website](#), for example:



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and housing associations: a guide

- [Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak](#), including guides on [Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak](#) and [Talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus](#).
- [Face mask fit-testing](#)
- [Protecting home workers](#)
- [RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19](#)

Flexibility in compliance due to access restrictions

We are working in partnership with the other UK housing federations to influence statutory regulators (Gas Safe, HSE etc.) on a flexible approach to statutory compliance in the situation that significant numbers of homes cannot be accessed for testing/inspection due to the outbreak. This area of work is a priority for CHC.

Gas safety

On 30th March, Welsh Government released its guidance for local authorities on [the enforcement of standards in rented properties in Wales](#), which advises LAs on how to effectively enforce standards in the private rented sector (including housing associations/ registered social landlords). The guidance reiterates that landlords are required to have annual gas safety checks. It also states that if a landlord can show they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with their duty, they are not in breach of the duty. Showing reasonable steps includes keeping copies of all communications had with tenants and gas safety inspectors.

CHC have commissioned Devonshires Solicitors to help us understand the legal, regulatory and practical issues around gas safety compliance. Devonshires have produced a briefing note, which you can find [here](#).

Current guidance from Gas Safe on compliance with gas testing can be found [here](#).

Fire safety

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) provides [guidance on a number of topics](#). On 25th March they issued [guidance on the use of waking watches where a stay-put strategy has been suspended](#).

12. Contact

If you have any queries regarding this document, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Sarah Scotcher, Policy & External Affairs Project Officer
- Sarah-Scotcher@chcymru.org.uk
- 07469 147485