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Domestic Abuse Services

For over 40 years, Housing for Women has been supporting women and children in London escaping domestic violence and abuse.

Spring is just around the corner

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Connect, your Resident Newsletter

With the clocks going forward at the end of March and the days finally getting longer, it's finally starting to feel as if Spring is on its way.

We've hit the ground running in 2021, getting many of our planned works off the ground; putting teams in place to deliver large projects, assessing the quality and value of our sites, and working with residents to ensure that your needs are met and your voices are heard, as we work to make sure your homes are safe and secure.

In this newsletter, we'll be looking at how the latest government budget update may affect you, we're letting you know what you can expect from us as COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease, and introducing some key members of the Asset Management Team, so you know who is responsible for maintaining your homes.



Changes to lockdown restrictions

After a difficult winter lockdown, we welcome the Government roadmap to ease restrictions in time for Spring.

We understand the financial and mental toll the past year has had, especially for women who have, in the main, borne the brunt of the impact of Covid. The roadmap out of lockdown depends on infection rates and hospitalisations remaining at a manageable rate for the NHS. So, while we hope for better days ahead where we can meet with our friends and loved ones, we must also continue to socially distance and wear masks as required.

At Housing for Women, we recognise the easing of lockdown restrictions alone won't address the lingering effects the pandemic

has had on communities. In the weeks and months ahead, we will continue work hard to support you remotely, to help all of us transition back to normal life. As well as this, we are committed to exploring ways our residents can re-connect with one other through community-led initiatives when it is safe to do so. As always, we are keen to have your suggestions for how best to do this.

Email us on communications@h4w.co.uk with your ideas.

STEP 1
29 MARCH

BUSINESS / ACTIVITIES	SOCIAL CONTACT	TRAVEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised outdoor sport (children and adults) Outdoor sport and leisure facilities All outdoor children's activities Outdoor parent & child groups (up to 15 people, excluding under 5s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rule of 6 or two households outdoors Household only indoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise travel No domestic or international holidays

COVID-19 ROADMAP 2021

STEP 2
NO EARLIER THAN 12 APRIL
At least 5 weeks after Step 1

BUSINESS / ACTIVITIES	LARGER EVENTS	TRAVEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All retail Personal care Libraries and community centres Most outdoor attractions Indoor leisure inc. gyms (individual or household use only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-contained accommodation All children's activities Outdoor hospitality Indoor parent and child groups (up to 15 people, excluding under 5s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funerals (30 people) Weddings, wakes, receptions (15 people) Event pilots Domestic overnight stays (household only) No international holidays

COVID-19 ROADMAP 2021

STEP 3
NO EARLIER THAN 17 MAY
At least 5 weeks after Step 2

BUSINESS / ACTIVITIES	SOCIAL CONTACT	LARGER EVENTS	TRAVEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor hospitality Indoor entertainment and attractions Organised indoor sport (adult) Remaining accommodation Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 30 people outdoors Indoors: Up to 6 people or a larger group from 2 households only (subject to review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most significant life events (30 people) Indoor events 1,000 people or 50% capacity (whichever is lower) Outdoor events 4,000 people or 50% capacity (whichever is lower) Large seated outdoor venues 10,000 people or 25% capacity (whichever is lower) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays International travel (subject to review)

COVID-19 ROADMAP 2021

STEP 4
NO EARLIER THAN 21 JUNE
At least 5 weeks after Step 3

BUSINESS / ACTIVITIES	SOCIAL CONTACT	LARGER EVENTS	TRAVEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remaining businesses, including nightclubs (subject to review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal limit (subject to review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal limit on life events (subject to review) Larger events (subject to review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays (subject to review) International travel (subject to review)

COVID-19 ROADMAP 2021



What the easing of lockdown restrictions means for Housing for Women services

In line with Government guidelines for businesses, we will be able to make some changes to the way we can deliver our services in the coming months.

Repairs service

We will be making the following changes to our repairs service over the next few months.

We will begin to make contact with residents who have had a repair put 'on hold' due to the restrictions and confirm their current circumstances to help us better prepare when the time comes to issue the work.

From 12 April: As restrictions ease around the mixing of households in outdoor settings, we anticipate being able to complete more non-urgent external repairs and those in communal areas. We will contact residents who have had a repair put 'on hold' due to the restrictions and review their current circumstances to help us better prioritise the work. We will still be operating an emergency-only approach to repairs inside people's homes.



From 17 May: As mixing indoors becomes permissible, it brings us a step closer towards business as usual. To ensure we get this next step right, we cannot issue all the work at once, and will instead continue to operate on a priority-based service. This approach will consider residents' circumstances, the nature of the repair and the capacity of our contractors. Our standard turnaround time for non-urgent repairs may be extended to assist with clearing the backlog as efficiently as possible.

From 21 June: We expect to still be playing catch up from the 'on hold' jobs and may still be operating a priority-based service. All residents on the list will be informed and any new requests will be dealt with accordingly.



**OUR STANDARD
TURNAROUND TIME
FOR NON-URGENT
REPAIRS MAY BE
EXTENDED TO ASSIST
WITH CLEARING THE
BACKLOG AS EFFICIENTLY
AS POSSIBLE.**

Housing management services

Meetings with residents to discuss Rent/Arrears, Anti-Social Behaviour, Lettings, and other tenancy matters will continue virtually via facetime and telephone as far as is possible and our Head Office in Brixton will remain closed to residents and visitors for the next few months.

We have already started to review our working practices for a 'Post Covid' world and we will share our thoughts about this over the next few months.

The Government have made plenty of reassurances that the slow easing of restrictions should be 'irreversible', but as ever, we will continue to update you with any changes that may affect our services.

Virtual Surgeries

We recognise that the COVID-19 restrictions that have been in place over the past year, and the impact these has had on our staff resources, may have made it more difficult to report and resolve problems in your homes.

To help address this we are delivering virtual surgeries. You will be able to book an online appointment with an officer to discuss any concerns you may have about your home including:

- + Repairs to your home, communal areas, or block
- + Tenancy issues including rent account queries, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and accessing services
- + Neighbourhood services such as cleaning, gardening and parking.

This approach will enable you to show us any repairs issues in and around your home in real time via your phone camera or webcam, reducing the need for a visit. These

surgeries will also provide you with an opportunity for wider discussion on your tenancy and arrange any follow-up appointments or referrals to supporting agencies.

Compliance checks

We have a duty to you to make sure that your homes are safe. We call this Compliance, which means we are required to work in line with the rules and laws set out for your homes.

Compliance generally covers things like:

Gas safety: regularly checking gas pipes and fittings for leaks and ensuring any gas appliances we have provided you with are working as they should.

Electrical safety: checking the condition of your electrics, making sure there is no exposed wiring or broken sockets in your home that could be a fire risk, and that the electrical equipment and appliances in your home are safe to use.

Fire safety: we need to check that automatic fire doors and alarm systems are fully functioning, to ensure should a fire break out, it is contained within the property to allow for evacuation.

Now that lockdown restrictions are beginning to ease in England, we will be working closely with our partnering service providers to make sure these checks are being carried out. We need your cooperation to let our partners in to your homes to carry out this work.

Meet the Team

Asset Management Team

It has been a challenging year when it comes to repairs and some of you have raised concerns about the repairs service. Your feedback is always welcome and useful as we continue to learn as an organisation.



YOU SAID:
"Sometimes the work delivered on our homes is not the highest standard it could be"

WE HAVE:
Reviewed our supplier's performance and are sourcing new contractors to deliver day-to-day responsive repairs, planned works and major works. We aim to have new partner contractors in place by September 2021.



YOU SAID:
"I think the overall quality of my home could be improved"

WE HAVE:
Developed a housing stock condition survey, which will be completed May – June 2021. Our findings will support the development of our five-year planned programme of works. The plan is being finalised and will be shared with you in October 2021.



YOU SAID:
"I have some concerns about my safety and my neighbour's safety in our blocks and homes."

WE HAVE:
Recruited a dedicated in-house compliance team, and are working with specialist consultants, to deliver full property compliance and works programmes. Our team will prioritise engaging our customers in managing block safety.



YOU SAID:
"Communication can be poor sometimes and I often have to chase repair work and repeat my situation to several members of the Housing for Women Team."

WE HAVE:
Recruited and trained new team members so that there is always someone to report your concerns and repairs to, and who will communicate clearly with you while your housing repair work is being carried out.



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Mandy Dunstan

Mandy is responsible for the overall leadership and management of all Asset Management functions at Housing for Women. She directs and oversees all activities related to our properties, including Health & Safety, Fire Safety, Building Safety, Repairs & Major works. All underpinned by her commitment to delivering excellent customer service, quality of works and value for money.

Elly Farthing

Elly manages the services for all our properties. She leads and supports the repairs team, including out of hours support and customer service. She also manages void works, planned programmes of works, minor adaptations and all Estate services which include, cleaning, grounds maintenance, bulky refuse and pest control. She is responsible for ensuring that our customers receive high standards of customer service and quality work from our contractors .

Danny Thanapal

Danny manages the compliance of all our properties at Housing for Women, ensuring we deliver on our statutory responsibilities and that resident safety comes first. His role includes making sure we are compliant with the latest regulations and legislation. It is Danny's responsibility to make sure regular gas and electrical safety checks are carried out in your homes and properties, as well as any fire safety such as making sure alarm systems and fire doors are working properly.

Lorraine Lartey

Lorraine manages property programmes. These include major works programmes on your homes or estates, large projects, and delivery of property disposal. Lorraine works closely with residents to ensure that programmes are tailored to their needs and that they are kept informed throughout the process.

Sonia Wells

Sonia is our building surveyor responsible for Quality Assurance on our properties to meet the needs of our residents and our business objectives. She is responsible for disrepair cases, planning major works, and analysing data and customer feedback to continually improve operational delivery. Sonia also manages our inhouse resident liaison officer who may be able provide support to residents that are having significant works in their home.

If you are a Housing for Women resident and would like to work with us to help develop service standards and track the performance of our new contractors, please get in touch by emailing your interest and details to:

Mandy.Dunstan@h4w.co.uk



How the 2021 Budget affects you

This year's budget announcement is particularly important as we try to understand the impact that covid has had, and will continue to have, on our economy.

There's no denying the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has affected women more than men, but it is unlikely that we will know the full extent of this until further in the future.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak used this moment to thank mums for juggling work, childcare and household duties, however, made no mention

of targeted assistance in relation to this in the actual budget. Also missing from the Budget was any mention of the social care crisis – a predominately female workforce (58%) and unpaid carers of children and the elderly.

Here are some of the other ways the 2021 Budget will affect women and gender-specific services:



THE £20 EXTRA PER WEEK FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT RECIPIENTS IS TO BE EXTENDED FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS

Domestic abuse and rape victims

The Government are committing £19 million pounds on programmes towards tackling the surge in domestic abuse under lockdown.

A Pilot scheme 'respite rooms', is set to launch in 2022-2023 for women facing severe disadvantages.



Self-employment

For the 1.5 million self-employed women, the self-employed income support scheme (SEIS) has been extended to a further 6000,000 who filed their taxes in 2019/20.

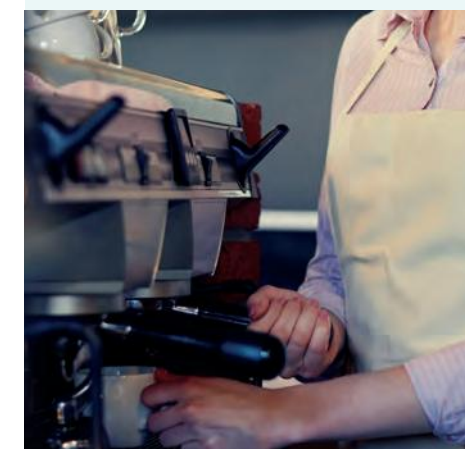
There are currently four grants available and another to open in July; however, women on maternity leave earn less, and therefore not entitled to the full amount.

Employment

The Government has extended the furlough scheme to September 2021, as well as allowing part-time work for those eligible.

The national living wage will see a rise of 2.2% from April 2021 and extended to 23-24 year-olds.

The minimum wage is also set to increase and there will be a Tax break freeze until April 2022.



Universal Credit

The £20 extra per week for Universal Credit recipients is to be extended for another six months.

A one-off payment of £500 will be made to eligible recipients of Working Tax Credit.



For more details, you can find the full breakdown of the 2021 Budget at: www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-2021-what-you-need-to-know





Ways to pay your rent?


Your rent is due each month in advance. It is due on the first day of each month. You can use any of the following methods to pay your rent or other charges:


 **Direct Debit or Standing Order**


 **Online via the Customer Portal** Visit my.hfw.org.uk

 **Online using Allpay** Pay online at www.allpayments.net

 **Telephone** If you have an Allpay card you can call their 24-hour payment line on **0330 041 6497**

 **Cheques** Please make cheques payable to Housing for Women. Please put your tenant number and address on the reverse.

 **Shops** You can pay at any shop displaying the PayPoint, Post Office or allpay.net signs

 **Internet banking** If you bank online, you can set up either a standing order or a one-off payment. Please ensure you quote your tenant reference number as the reference. Please quote Sort Code: **30-00-09** Quote bank Account: **00025164**

Top tips for Universal Credit Claimants

Universal Credit is a new type of benefit which replaces Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Working Tax Credit.

These are our top tips for being organised and making sure that your claim for Universal Credit goes as smoothly as possible.

Accept Your Claimant Commitment

When you make your claim for Universal Credit you must accept your claimant commitment online within 7 days otherwise your claim

with be closed and you will need to start your claim again.

Changes in Your Circumstances

Once you are claiming Universal Credit you are required to maintain your claimant commitment to find work, increase your hours and/or engage in work related activities with your Work Coach. This is called conditionality and if you do not complete it you may face a reduction of your payments.

If you are unable to carry out your claimant commitment due to a change in circumstances, please let your Work Coach know as soon as possible so they can temporarily amend your agreed duties.

Thought about paying your rent by Direct Debit?

Set up today to be automatically enrolled into a £50 gift card prize draw. A new winner will be selected each quarter! To set up visit www.hfw.org.uk/resident-area/rent-charges to download the direct debit form and return it to us.



Paying Your Rent

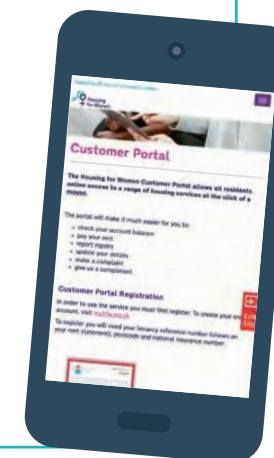
Paying your rent on time should be a priority each month. It is a key part of your tenancy agreement with us. Whether you pay your rent directly yourself, or it is funded by someone else such as Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, it's your responsibility to make sure that your rent gets paid.

If you are struggling, please contact your Neighbourhood Officer as soon as possible, so we can support you to find a solution and prevent any debt building up.

Customer Portal

Don't forget you can pay your rent, and book repairs through the Customer Portal.

Sign up now at www.hfw.org.uk/residents/customer-portal



New telephone system

Our new telephone system will make it easier for you to contact us, get through to the right department, and have your questions answered.

As part of the new system, our Housing Officers will no longer have individual mobile telephone numbers. Any previous contact numbers are no longer in use.

All calls need to go through our main number, **020 7501 6120**, so that you can get the help you need.

Complaints performance

January-March 2021

4 Compliments received

33% Closed on time

13 Total complaints

4 Received for General needs Housing

9 Received for repairs



TAKE NOTE!

Report a repair

Email: repairs@h4w.co.uk

Phone: 020 7510 6120
(press 3 for repairs)

Customer Portal: my.hfw.org.uk

We are open Monday to Friday 9am–5.00pm.

For emergency repairs outside of these hours please call **020 7510 6120**, press 3 for repairs, and your call will be diverted to our out of hours service that will be able to assist you.

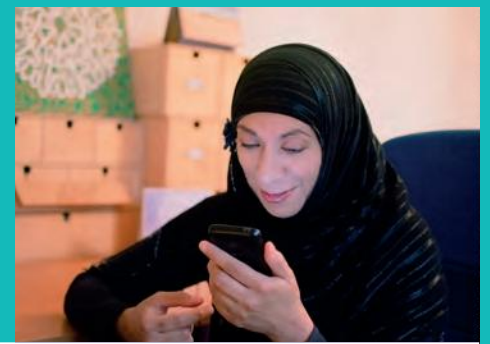
IT'S TIME TO GET ONLINE!

Struggling to find time to call us to book in your repair?

Want to check your account or make a payment online?

The Customer Portal allows you to do all of this and much more 24 hours a day.

To register and access your online account visit my.hfw.org.uk

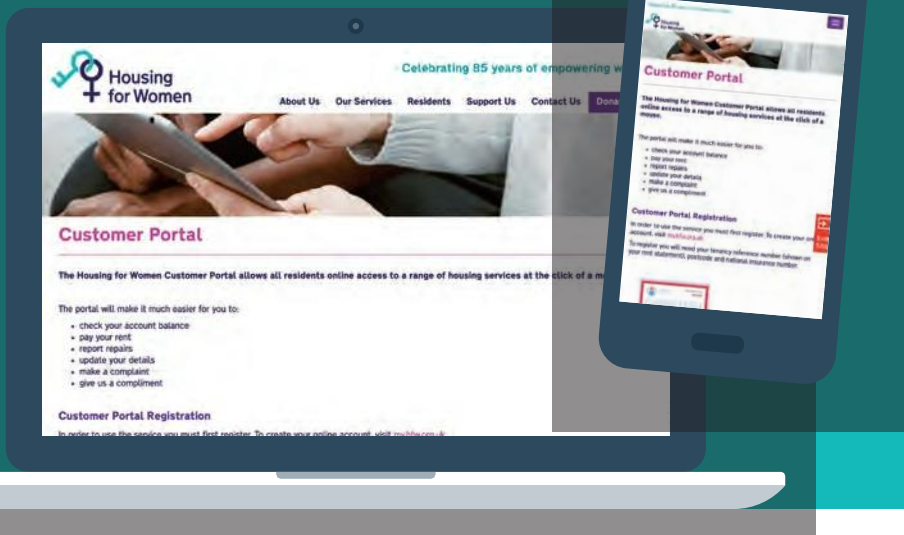


Complaints and compliments

We aim to provide you with good quality services, but we can only be sure we are succeeding if you let us know. 2020 gave us new challenges in supporting you and delivering our services, and we are always pleased to hear how we helped or how we can improve.

There are a number of ways you can get in touch to give us feedback or make a complaint:

1. Completing the online complaints form: www.hfw.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-compliments/
2. Emailing us at: complaints@h4w.co.uk
3. Via the **Customer Portal**
4. Contacting us on **social media** – We will reply via Direct Message to obtain your name and contact details so we can help. Please remember never to share your personal details publicly.



Your voice

'Brighter Futures' is designed for you, and so if you have anything you would like us to cover in future issues or you have a comment to make, please do let us know by writing to: Brighter Futures Editor, Housing for Women, Sixth Floor, Blue Star House, 234 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9SP or emailing Communications@h4w.co.uk.

Head Office and Registered Office

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Housing4Women



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