

Here for you



020 7926 2999
lambeth.gov.uk/coronavirus



Dear resident,

I hope you and your families are all remaining as well as can be. It is a hugely challenging time for everyone and this goes for us as a council too. COVID-19 has tested every aspect about how we provide services to you but I'm proud that we have been able to continue making sure that you are safe in your home and on your estates. Our housing officers have been out and about making sure Lambeth's housing services are maintained despite challenging circumstances. This has been helped by the support we have received from you, our residents.

As we move forward into the future and out of the pandemic, I am keen that we support you in strengthening our local communities which have grown ever stronger throughout this crisis. Our communities are what make Lambeth and I am proud to be the cabinet member leading this work and will be looking to build on this with you into the future.

Keep safe and best wishes,

Cllr Jennifer Brathwaite
Deputy Leader (Housing and Homelessness)





The safety, security and wellbeing of our residents is a key priority, and this newsletter brings together the advice and support that we have put in place at this time.

Neighbourhood Housing Offices

Your Housing Office remains closed to the public, but our staff remain available to you. If you require any tenancy management advice or support please contact your Housing Officer on **020 7926 6000**.

Estate Parking

Parking restrictions on Housing estates remain suspended. When we re-introduce the restriction there will be a two-week grace period whereby vehicles without permits or with an expired permit will be issued with a warning notice giving the vehicle owner time to purchase a permit or remove the vehicle from site. We are moving to an online system for issuing of permits and visitor permits. More details on this will be found at lambeth.gov.uk in due course.

Maintenance and Repairs

You should have a decent, warm and safe place to live. As you already know, Lambeth have had to prioritise the repairs that they have provided over the past three months with over 80% of all works undertaken since mid-March being emergency repairs.

From 1 June we have instructed our contact centre to raise works orders increasing the type of works we can undertake within your homes. These repairs will no longer be limited to uncontrollable leaks that are leading to flooding, back surging drains leading to flooding, blocked toilets when it is the only toilet in your property, the total loss of electrics, total loss of heating, gas leaks, sounding carbon monoxide alarms, total loss of heating, lift breakdowns and total loss of lighting to communal corridors, but will now include repairs relating to:

- glazing
- smaller leaks
- defective cisterns, shower pumps and faulty electrics
- timber floor repairs
- roof inspections.

Operatives entering your home should notify you in advance of arrival, maintain a safe distance and follow hygiene procedures.

No work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless it is to remedy a direct risk. In such a case, prior arrangements should be made to avoid any face to face contact, for example

when answering the door. The operative will wear appropriate PPE and be up to date with the latest guidance on how to work safely.

External maintenance and services

We are also expecting our contractors to resume working on external maintenance works. Operatives carrying out this work will adhere to the Government's 'Working Safely During Coronavirus' guidance to ensure any such work is carried out safely.

Gas safety checks

Every year, people die and are seriously injured by poorly maintained gas appliances.

We make every effort to abide by statutory safety obligations, such as annual gas safety inspections. If you are self-isolating and are contacted requesting you give access for a gas safety inspection, you should contact us to rearrange for the inspection to take place after your isolation has ended.

If you are shielding, we will balance the risk presented taking into account factors such as the age and type of appliance, previous maintenance history and date of the last gas check. In some situations, this might indicate that the gas safety inspection should still go ahead. In such a case, prior arrangements should be made to avoid any face to face contact, for example when answering the door.

The operative will be up to date with the latest guidance on how

to work safely including wearing appropriate PPE.

If you smell gas, or if you have concerns about the safety of your appliances, you should call the gas emergency service provider on **0800 111 999**, and switch off appliances until the gas emergency supplier, or a registered gas engineer, has attended and advised that the appliances are safe to use.

Building safety

We are clear that making buildings safe remains our top priority. Fire Risk Assessments and health and safety checks of all communal areas are continuing throughout the lockdown period. If you are requested to remove items within the communal areas of where you live, please cooperate to minimise risks to you and other residents.

For tenants seeking to move home

The Council has restarted Choice Based Lettings and is carrying out viewings within strict social distancing guidelines. If you are registered for a transfer to alternative accommodation please check listings of available properties. As demand far outstrips supply of social housing you should also consider other rehousing options such as mutual exchange.

If you wish to register for a move to alternative accommodation or have a query relating to your application or rehousing then please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on **020 7926 6000**.



Rent support for tenants

During this period, you should continue to pay rent and abide by all other terms of your tenancy agreement, but we do know that many people are facing financial difficulties. Our rents team can provide you with 1-2-1 advice and guidance on how to manage this.

We'll also have useful information on our website [lambeth.gov.uk](https://www.lambeth.gov.uk). This could include details on the benefits you're entitled to, information on new government packages you could be eligible for, or creating money management plans.

Please get in touch with us as soon as you think you may have financial difficulties by calling **020 7926 8790**.

Housing possession claims are suspended until 26 August meaning that cases currently in the system or about to go into it cannot progress to the stage where someone could be evicted. This means that we will not be able to apply for any new warrants, and we also won't be able to reschedule any evictions which were cancelled due to COVID-19.

In terms of possession cases, we can continue with those cases that are still being listed at Court, and we can send through any new applications.

To contact our rents teams, use 'live chat' accessed through the council's website:

[lambeth.gov.uk/council-tenants-and-homeowners](https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/council-tenants-and-homeowners).

You can also receive a balance enquiry by texting **BAL** followed by your **account number** to **0780 000 6116**.

Help and support on offer



Support is available if you're worried about your financial circumstances or becoming homeless.

If you are claiming benefits or experiencing financial hardship, the council may be able to help.

- The **Emergency Support Scheme** can provide assistance with food, fuel, furniture and white goods for households facing a crisis or emergency.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments** can help make up rent payments where benefit payments do not cover the full cost.
- **Council Tax Support** can help reduce Council Tax bills for people on low incomes.
- There is a **Discretionary Council Tax Support Hardship Payment scheme** for those experiencing particular financial hardship.
- Council housing tenants affected by the coronavirus and worried about paying their rent should contact us via lambeth.gov.uk or call us on **020 7926 8790**

Support for residents experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse

It is acknowledged that staying at home can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse.

For anyone who is or feels they are at risk of abuse, it is important to remember that there is help and support available to you, including police response, online support, helplines, refuges and other services.

The household isolation instruction as a result of coronavirus does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse. Please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Team on **020 7926 6000** for further advice and guidance.

Do you feel threatened or at risk of violence?

We can support you.

Contact the Gaia Centre:

Telephone: **020 7733 8724**

Email:

lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk

Website: refuge.org.uk

Your wellbeing

The coronavirus outbreak has had an effect on everyone's daily lives.

Coping with mental health problems

If you or someone you know is experiencing mental health problems and need support, please visit lambethtogether.net/living-well-network-alliance/get-help or call **0800 090 2456**.

If you're feeling anxious try:
nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety

Need to talk to a therapist?

(Either online or via the phone)
Search for: Lambeth talking therapies, fill in the online form and someone will call you in a day or two.

Shopping service

Are you vulnerable or self-isolating? Let us do the shopping for you.

Call our helpline **020 7926 2999**

Open Monday-Saturday, 9am-6pm

Or ask someone to call on your behalf.

Further advice on coronavirus

The Government's advice on coronavirus is available in one place, covering a range of topics including:

- Protecting yourself and others from coronavirus
- Work
- Financial support and money.

You can find out more information here: gov.uk/coronavirus

Anti-social behaviour

The police and council have a significant range of powers to tackle anti-social behaviour. In response to the coronavirus outbreak all possession cases before the courts, including possession action against tenants for anti-social behaviour, has been suspended for three months. However, other interventions are possible depending on the circumstances.

We can still support you if you are suffering from anti-social behaviour so please contact us at lambeth.gov.uk/council-tenants-and-homeowners/neighbourhood-services/report-anti-social-behaviour-on-your-estate