

15 May 2020

To: All Sandbourne tenants, leaseholders  
and shared owners



## Coronavirus/COVID 19 – Update (4)

On behalf of the team at Sandbourne we hope that you and your household remain well and are taking care of yourselves.

We have now reviewed the Prime Minister's announcement on 10 May and the government advice that followed. As a result, we are pleased to be able to tell you about some changes to the way that we deliver our services. These are:

### Contacting Sandbourne

We cannot yet safely re-open our office at Beech House, and therefore the best way of contacting us remains by post, email, or our website contact form (details at the bottom of page 4). We do access the office to collect post and can also pick up voicemail message remotely and will continue to do this on a regular basis. We are updating our answerphone and, if you have an urgent enquiry and cannot write to us or do not have access to email or the internet, you can leave us a message and we will ensure that this is passed onto the right member of the team.

Inevitably, we have had no face-to-face contact between our team members for a number of weeks, but each of us is able to access virtually all of our systems and documents from home, and have been staying in touch regularly by telephone and video conferencing. This has actually worked better than we could have wished for and hope it provides you with some re-assurance that if you do have something that you need to report to us then we can ensure that it gets to the right person and is responded to with as little delay as possible.

When we are able re-open the office, this is likely to be on a phased basis but we will let you have more details as to how and when this will happen over the coming weeks.

### Cleaning of communal areas

We are pleased to say that our usual cleaning company, Approve Cleaning, are available again and we expect them to begin working round all developments (except Craighleith) from the beginning of June. We have decided to retain the specialist cleaning contractors at least until the end of June as we want to minimise the potential risk of infection in common areas for as long as we can. We will **not** be recharging any of the cost of the specialist cleaning company to residents through their service charge.

### Grounds maintenance

In light of the announcement on 11 May we will be asking all our grounds maintenance contractors to re-instate their usual frequency of visits to our sites, where they have the capacity to do so and have provided us with a risk assessment indicating how this can be done safely.

### Work to vacant homes and property maintenance

During the lockdown we suspended all but emergency repairs, essential safety checks and servicing. Subject to the contractors providing us with a satisfactory risk assessment we are now able to undertake external works, some urgent repairs and work to bring empty homes back into occupation.

Current advice is that we should only undertake what are termed 'essential lettings'. We have not let any vacant homes since the lockdown was introduced and do not intend to do so until the advice changes. When it does, our plan is to take a phased approach based on the potential risks for each type of property with a range of measures in place to reduce these as far as we can.

These changes inevitably mean that there will be more people on site than there have been for some weeks and, combined with the relaxation of some aspects of the lockdown, you may well

also see more of your neighbours than you have in recent times. **It is therefore more than ever important that everyone respects social distancing and remains at least 2m apart from anyone that they meet on site.**

### **Social distancing**

Neither Sandbourne nor the Police now have any powers to enforce the social distancing guidelines, so we are reliant on everyone taking a common sense approach and, as a result, hopefully reducing the rate of infection still further. If we have repeated reports of people failing to follow the guidelines we may have no alternative but to scale back the changes outlined in this notification.

Finally, whilst the changes to service are small, we hope that you will notice these in the coming weeks and they are at least a start to returning to something that feels rather more normal than what we have been living with in recent times.

Thank you for your patience and understanding and please be assured that we will continue to do our best to provide the services that we can and make it easier for you to access them when it is safe for everyone to do so.

In the meantime, please do your best to stay as safe as you can.

*David Hall, Head of Housing*

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### **Self-isolating, having symptoms of coronavirus or tested positive**

Please remember to let us know if you are self-isolating, have symptoms of the virus or have tested positive. This is particularly important in the event of you needing an emergency or urgent repair so that we can ensure our contractors are aware of your situation and that the correct measures for your protection are in place.

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### **Are you having problems paying your rent?**

Sandbourne is aware that, during this difficult time with the 'lockdown' due to the Covid-19 virus, some people may be suffering a reduction in income that will make it more difficult to pay their bills for their basic needs such as food, water, energy and accommodation and may not have the savings to carry them through.

However, for some people it might be that you pay by a rent card and simply can't get out to make a payment due to self-isolation. If this is the case, please contact us so that we can try and find a suitable solution for you.

For those residents who are experiencing financial issues, due to the current situation, we want to remind you that you can seek help to meet your rent and service charges through the Housing Benefit system administered by your local authority and we would recommend that you contact them immediately to make an application for Housing Benefit if you have already suffered a drop in household income.

If there are still rent arrears after your claim for Housing Benefit payments has been made to you (or direct to Sandbourne), we can support you by making a manageable repayment agreement with you based on your income. We would probably not be able to meet with you to go through your income and expenditure at this point in time but would be able to engage with you by email, letter or telephone to help to sort this out.

Please contact us (details at the bottom of page 4) so that one of our housing team can get back to you. To further help, listed below are some other useful contacts.

#### **Useful contact details:**

If you or your partner is of working age and you are seeking assistance with your rent, please first check if you should **apply for Universal Credit**. To apply, you should do so on-line at [www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit).

## **If you are applying for Housing Benefit:**

### **Bournemouth HB**

- Claim on-line at: [www.bournemouth.gov.uk/benefitssupport/HousingBenefit/claimonline](http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/benefitssupport/HousingBenefit/claimonline)
- Phone the Benefits Services on: 01202 451592
- Email at: [benefits.bournemouth@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:benefits.bournemouth@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

### **Poole HB**

- Claim on-line at: [www.poole.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-help/apply-for-benefits](http://www.poole.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-help/apply-for-benefits)
- Phone the Benefits Services on: 0345 034 4569
- Email at: [svpp@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:svpp@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

### **East and North Dorset HB**

- Claim on-line at: [www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/benefits/housing-benefit/housing-benefits-apply](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/benefits/housing-benefit/housing-benefits-apply)
- Phone the Benefits Services on: 0345 034 4569
- Email at: [svpp@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:svpp@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

### **New Forest District Council HB**

- Claim on-line at: [www.newforest.gov.uk/article/585/Claiming-Housing-Benefit-and-Council-Tax-Reduction](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/585/Claiming-Housing-Benefit-and-Council-Tax-Reduction)
- Phone the Benefits Services on: 01590 646121
- Email at: [benefits@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@nfdc.gov.uk)

## **Help with debt and money advice**

### **Citizens Advice Bureau:**

- **If you live in the BCP area**, go online at [www.citizensadvicebcp.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicebcp.org.uk)  
BCP Advice Line: 03444 111 444
- **If you live in East Dorset**, call 01202 884738 leaving your name and number and an adviser will call you back, or email [wimborne@eastdorset.cabinet.org.uk](mailto:wimborne@eastdorset.cabinet.org.uk)
- **If you live in North Dorset**, call 03444 111 445
- **If you live in the New Forest area (Ringwood)**, call the advice line on 0300 330 9009, or go online at [www.newforestcab.org.uk](http://www.newforestcab.org.uk)

### **Money Advice Service:**

- Free and impartial money advice, set up by government:
- Website: [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)
- Telephone: 0800 138 7777

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## **Rent Statements**

Some of you may have noticed that we have not been able to send out quarterly rent statements since 24 March because of our staff working from home during the lockdown.

However, if this is causing you a problem and you would like a statement, we can send you one; just email [info@sandbourne.org.uk](mailto:info@sandbourne.org.uk) or leave us a voicemail message.

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## **Domestic abuse support - help is available**

Organisations across Dorset, including the Police, are raising awareness of domestic abuse because of concerns it may increase due to the impact of coronavirus lockdown. Sadly, Covid-19 may cause a rise in domestic abuse and the cycle of violence may intensify with people having to isolate themselves, and those who may be experiencing it may be unsure how to access support. Organisations including the local authorities and Police want to re-assure victims that help and support is available during these unprecedented times.

If you, or someone you know, is a victim of abuse whether it is physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial and the abuser is trying to control the victim and uses abuse or violence to achieve that control, help and support is available. We have listed some useful advice and contacts over the page.

## **Useful Contacts:**

Freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247.

The government instruction to 'stay home' does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse. There is support if you are at risk of abuse and services to help you leave.

## **Emergency help**

Call 999 if you or your children are in immediate danger.

## **What to do if you can't talk on the phone when you call 999:**

### **Mobile**

- If prompted, press 55, this will transfer your call to the police under the 'Make Yourself Heard' system.
- Pressing 55 only works on mobiles and does not allow police to track your location.

### **Landline (home phone)**

- Listen to the questions from the operator and if possible, respond by coughing or tapping the head set.
- If only background noise can be heard and operators can't decide whether an emergency service is needed, then you'll be connected to a police call handler.
- Information about your location should be automatically available to the call handlers to help provide a response.

### **Non-emergency**

You can report a crime 24-hours a day, seven days a week by calling 101. You can also go on-line to Dorset Police and use the 101 web chat or the on-line crime reporting form.

## **Contacts who can help and support you:**

- BCHA Domestic Abuse Referrals and Support Line: 01202 710 777
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole – Outreach (24 hours): 01202 710 777
- Dorset Police abuse advice and support: using the details above, 999, 101 or on-line
- Mankind Initiative: 01823 334244
- National Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours): 0808 2000 247
- Sexual Trauma and Recovery Services (STARS Dorset) Support Line: 01202 308855 (on-line live chat also available through [www.starsdorset.org](http://www.starsdorset.org))
- Victim Support Dorset team: 0300 3030 163 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to 6pm, Tuesday and Thursday 9am to 8pm. Outside of these times you can still access their services 24/7 through their national support line on 0808 16 89111 or their free and anonymous Live Chat service.

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## **Reminder - how to contact Sandbourne during the lockdown**

For emergencies, or emergency repairs, when you cannot get hold of us - please use your pull-cord in the usual way if you have one, or call Careline on 01202 452795.

For urgent repairs, please email [repairs@sandbourne.org.uk](mailto:repairs@sandbourne.org.uk).

For all other housing or general enquiries, please email [info@sandbourne.org.uk](mailto:info@sandbourne.org.uk).

You can also write to us using the [www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk](http://www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk) website contact form or by letter to our office at Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road, Poole, BH15 2BU.

Alternatively, you can leave a message on our answerphone (01202 671222) which we can pick up remotely.

## **Another useful contact:**

BCP has a 'Friendship Line' for those who are lonely/want to chat 8am to 9pm on 01202 022987.