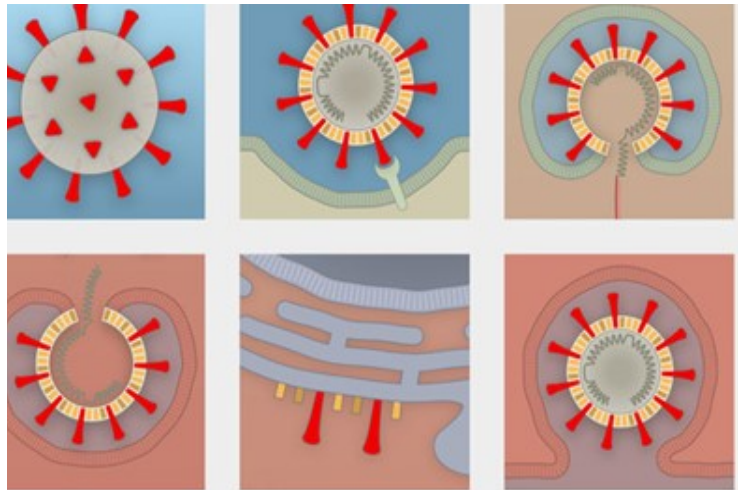




SPECIAL NEWSLETTER

**IMPORTANT
INFORMATION FOR
MEMBERS
CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19)**



**POSTPONEMENT OF
GENERAL MEETING
Tuesday 24th March**

We have taken the decision to cancel the General meeting, due to take place on Tuesday 24th March. We feel this is the right decision to protect our staff and residents. See inside for more information.

**HOUSING OFFICE
249 LEWISHAM WAY
SE4 1XF**

**Open 9.00 am - 4.30 pm
Monday to Friday**

Tel: 020 8691 5898
Email: admin@brockley.coop
www.brockley-tenants-co-op.co.uk

Coronavirus - how we are responding

By Gina Betteridge, Co-op Manager

As everyone is aware, Coronavirus, also known as COVID 19, is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. Elderly people and those with underlying health conditions are more at risk from the virus. As a housing provider and an employer I would like to assure Members that we have plans in place to respond to the developing situation.

In order to protect both staff members and residents, we have taken the decision to postpone the General Meeting, scheduled for Tuesday 24th March. As everyone is aware, our meeting space is not very large and even though the chance of contracting the virus may be small, we would not like to expose any person to an increased risk. Our aim is to postpone the General Meeting until April, but a decision will be taken nearer the time, depending on the evolving situation and advice issued by the government and the NHS.

We are making every effort to operate the business as normal and currently staff are still working from the Housing Office. If the situation changes and we are in a position where the office has to close, we have plans in place for staff to work remotely. We are also able to divert the office phones so Members will always be able to keep in touch with the staff team. To protect members and staff, we have taken the difficult decision to close the office to non-essential visitors. If you need support or assistance, please call **020 8691 5898** or email **housing@brockley.coop**. Please note that staff members will also only be conducting essential visits to people's properties.

Where to get information you can trust

The NHS website explains what COVID-19 is and what steps you should take if you have visited an affected area and/or you think you have symptoms:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19

Find out the number of cases and risk level in the UK, what to do if you have symptoms, and what the government is doing about the virus:

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public

Repairs & Contractors

Currently all our contractors are working as normal.

If you think there is a possibility you have the virus, or you are self-isolating, and you are due to have one of our staff or a contractor visit, please do the responsible thing and let us know. We are reliant on self-disclosure to help us reduce the risk of infection. We will then assess the risk and deal with each situation as it arises.

Please note, that it is possible, we may find ourselves in a situation where we are only able to deal with emergency repairs. This is because not all contractors may be available or because of illness within the staff team. Please check the website for updates - www.brockley-tenants-co-op.co.uk



Help with paying your rent

- If you are not receiving any income and unable to pay your rent because you are affected by coronavirus, it is vital that you contact the housing office.
- We can offer support and advice where needed whether it is help with claiming additional benefit, paying your rent, shopping and mental health.
- We can also discuss setting up financial instalment agreements for a later stage to help you catch up with your rent once you are receiving an income and no longer affected by coronavirus.
- If you are self-isolating and unable to leave your home, we can accept payments over the phone via card or send you an email link to pay your rent.



- If you have access to online banking and you are able to pay rent, please use the following bank details: sort code 30-98-90 and account number 17074568 and use your address or rent account number as reference.

Try not to worry - we're here to help.

Benefit & Work Advice

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

- If you are employed and eligible for Statutory Sick Pay this will now be paid from the first day of sickness absence, rather than the fourth day, for people who have COVID-19 or have to self isolate.
- Please check with your employer or refer back to your employment contract to see if you are eligible to claim. If you are not eligible for Statutory Sick Pay you may be able to claim Universal Credit or Employment Support Allowance.
- If your employer requests evidence that you need to stay at home, you will be able to get it from NHS 111 Online instead of having to get a fit note from your doctor.

Universal Credit (UC) & Employment Support Allowance (ESA)

New Claims

If you are currently affected by coronavirus and are not eligible for Statutory Sick Pay you can claim either Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance.

- You will not be required to produce a fit note
- You should not attend the jobcentre in person
- You can apply online from home if you have internet access. If you don't have access to the internet, you can also apply by phone (see page 5 for details)
- You can receive Universal Credit up to a month in advance immediately without attending a job centre. All new Employment and Support Allowance claims will be paid on the first day instead of a 7-day waiting period.

Existing Claims

- If you are already claiming Universal Credit and think you may have been affected by coronavirus, contact your work coach as soon as possible using your online journal or via the helpline. Please do this as soon as possible to avoid being sanctioned.
- Claimants who are staying at home as a result of coronavirus will have their mandatory work search and work availability requirements removed to account for a period of sickness

Self-Employment

- The government has recognised that self-employed people and employees who are below the Lower Earnings Limit are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay.
- The best financial support in this case is via the Welfare system, in particular the new style Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit.
- You will be eligible to apply for these benefits if you are prevented from working because of a risk to public health as well as contracting the virus.
- If you run a business or are self-employed and are concerned about paying your tax due to coronavirus, you can call HMRC's helpline for help and advice.

Useful contact numbers & websites

Universal Credit Helpline: 0800 328 5644 (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm)

Employment Support Allowance Helpline: 0800 328 5644 (choose option 2, then option 3) (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm)

Jobcentre Plus Helpline: 0800 055 6688 (new Claims) 0800 169 0310 (Existing claims) (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm)

HRMC Helpline for self-employed & small businesses: 0800 0159 559 (Monday to Friday 8am-8pm/Saturday 8am-4pm)

- www.gov.uk
- www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus
- www.acas.org.uk/checking-sick-pay/statutory-sick-pay-ssp



Health advice & Information

The current advice is to stay at home if you have either of these symptoms:

- a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
 - a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly
- Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.**

How long to stay at home

- if you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days
- if you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms. If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.
- If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

Things you should do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- avoid close contact with people who have symptoms of coronavirus
- only travel on public transport if you need to
- work from home, if you can
- avoid social activities, such as going to pubs, cafes, restaurants, theatres and cinemas
- avoid events with large groups of people
- use phone, online services, or apps to contact your GP surgery or other NHS services

Strength in Community

We are here to help. Over the next few days, we will be contacting our more vulnerable and older residents to see if there is any assistance we can offer them. We feel that as a community organisation, we can play a vital role in assisting those who may be in need in the local area.

We would like to encourage any Member who needs help for themselves, or is concerned about a family member, friend or neighbour (they do not have to be a Co-op resident) to contact the housing office on **020 8691 5898** or email **housing@brockley.coop**

If you are also willing to put yourselves forward as a potential helper to those who may be more vulnerable, please get in touch. This could include helping to deliver essential items of shopping or picking up a prescription.

We are aware that much of the information and links to advice are on the Internet, but for some of our residents access to this information may not always be easily available. We would therefore welcome any Member to contact us at the office for advice or assistance.

We can offer advice over the phone or via email or we can send out printed material, for example, in relation to claiming benefits, statutory sick pay or any other work related queries you may have.

