



Update 14-05-20

Dear Customer,

You will no doubt have seen the recent announcements from Government marking the first steps in an easing of coronavirus restrictions and I wanted to share some initial thoughts with you as to how this may affect rented properties in England. We note that the approach is different in devolved parts of the UK and will ensure that any changes in our approach comply with local guidance.

Two particular announcements which will most impact the English rented sector are the easing of restrictions on letting agents and a continuation of the furloughing scheme.

### Letting Agents

Agents are now encouraged to return to work and to meet with customers in their offices and at properties for viewings, but only where it is safe to do so for all parties and where social distancing can be maintained.

In line with our previous advice, if you are planning to move at the end of your tenancy or have had a move delayed as a result of the coronavirus situation, please continue to contact your property manager in the usual way. Also, if you were planning to move and now find that you no longer wish to or are unable to do so, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can support you and maintain our records.

### Rent payments

Whilst there has been some easing of restrictions and a return to work in some sectors, we appreciate that, for many, there has been no change to working arrangements and that this continues to be a difficult time.

If you are already furloughed, have recently become furloughed or if your circumstances have changed as a result of the coronavirus, please get in touch with us. We would remind you that it remains your responsibility to meet your rent payments but would ask that if you are concerned about your ability to do this please speak to your property management team as we will be able to offer advice, and may be able to help with a spreading of future payments.

Further information can be found as follows:

#### Universal Credit

*There is new Government support in place to help those affected by coronavirus. Currently there is no longer any requirement to attend an interview at a job centre to start a claim, and all applications will be dealt with online. Information can be found [here](#).*



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## Financial Support

*You may not have previously claimed benefit or your circumstances may have changed. You can find out what financial support may be available to you on the [entitled to free benefit calculator](#). To find out what you might be able to claim enter your details and you'll receive an estimate of your entitlement to benefits, tax credits and universal credit.*

## **Maintenance**

In addition, you will have seen that the construction industry is being encouraged to return to work. We anticipate that there will also be a general increase in capacity and availability of maintenance contractors and, as such, we hope that we will be able to instruct more non-essential maintenance and repairs. This will, of course be subject to contractors maintaining safe working practices as defined by Government.

We have issued instructions to all contractors who are able to undertake works to follow a number of measures to maintain social distancing and reduce the risk of any contamination, which are:

- Ask you to wait in another room while the repair is taking place – always observing the government's advice on social distancing.
- Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Wash their hands or use hand sanitiser (provided by themselves) upon arrival and when leaving the property.
- Wash down any surfaces with antibacterial products (provided by themselves) that they may have come into contact with when undertaking work.

If you are visited by a contractor and you are not satisfied that they are observing these actions you should not let them into your home and report the event to your property manager.

More coronavirus-related advice can be found at [www.touchstoneresi.co.uk/customers/fags](http://www.touchstoneresi.co.uk/customers/fags) and we will, of course, provides further updates to you as more information is provided, both by Government and by industry bodies as they react to the initial easing of lockdown restrictions.

I would also reiterate that our priority remains the wellbeing and safety of our customers and clients, contractors and colleagues, and we will continue to make this our priority as we take safe and sensible steps over the coming months as we continue to operate as fully as possible within the changing conditions.

Yours faithfully

Helen Kings  
Managing Director



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