

New guidance on moving home

Anyone in England can now move home as long as health guidance can be followed. This applies to both renters and buyers.

The law previously only allowed moving home if you had reasonable grounds for doing so at this time.

That restriction was necessary and appropriate at the time, but we are now able to change the rules so that people are free to start looking for a new home, and builders, developers and other property professionals are supported to return to work.

This can be done while minimising the risk of spreading the virus through continued observance of hygiene measures and social distancing.

The government has published [new guidance on moving home](#) which you are encouraged to read in full.

It is important that everyone knows how to stay alert, contain the virus and save lives. Our success containing the virus so far has been hard fought and hard won. We must proceed with the utmost care in the next phase, and avoid undoing what we have achieved.

One of the simplest steps you can take when moving home is to wash your hands frequently and wherever possible stay at least 2 metres apart from people who are not members of your household.

The process of finding and moving into a new home is likely to be different given the need to reduce spreading coronavirus.

This will include doing more of the process online, such as virtual initial viewings; vacating your current property whilst other people are shown around; and ensuring your property is thoroughly cleaned before someone else moves in.

Removal firms are able to operate, although they may need to adjust usual procedures in order to ensure moves happen as safely as possible.

Your legal representative should be able to carry out searches on your property online in order to progress your transaction and you can contact them to discuss likely timescales.

Your surveyor can undertake surveys of the property you wish to purchase, in line with health guidance. This includes surveyors only entering a property if members of the household are not showing symptoms of coronavirus or self-isolating.

We encourage all parties involved to be as flexible as possible and be prepared to reschedule moves if someone becomes ill with coronavirus or must self-isolate.

The government introduced a temporary ban on evictions last March and this remains in place.

Changes to the planning system

The government has announced a [number of changes to the planning system](#) to help support safe construction work.

Builders will also be allowed to agree more flexible construction site working hours with their local council. This will make it easier to follow public health guidance onsite and stagger builders' arrival times, making public transport less busy and so reducing the risk of infection.

Additionally, new regulations will allow planning authorities and developers to publicise planning applications through social media instead of having to rely on posters and letters, helping unblock the service and allowing it to support new development.

The government is also providing local councils with more flexibility to support smaller developers by allowing them to defer Community Infrastructure Levy payments.

This will help smaller developers struggling with their cashflow due to the pandemic while ensuring communities still receive funding towards local infrastructure in the longer term.

Safe Working Charter

A new [Charter](#) has been launched by the government and the Home Builders Federation, helping construction sites reopen in line with health guidance.

Construction companies signing up to the Charter commit to returning to work safely, including working with their subcontractors to develop detailed safe working practices.

The Charter enables housebuilders to make a common commitment to operate in line with safe working guidance. This helps give confidence to employees working on sites, and comfort to the public that work is being undertaken safely.

Signatories to the Charter have publicly committed to safe working practices in accordance with Government and Construction Leadership Council guidance.

The Charter is for housebuilders of all size, including small and medium-sized enterprises.