

RSH statements on coronavirus (COVID-19)

Update 16 June 2021: Confirmation of return to pre-coronavirus reporting arrangements

During 2020 we changed some of our data submission and other regulatory requirements in response to the pandemic. As we confirmed previously, we have reverted back to our usual requirements for 2021.

- We wrote to all providers of social housing about the data requirements that apply to them for 2021/22 in March 2021. Our data submission deadlines are also set out in [information required from registered providers](#).
- We expect reporting on Value for Money to be in line with [regulatory standards and our code of practice](#).
- We are not collecting [CORS](#) data from providers. The last data collection was in April 2021.
- We are continuing to carry out in-depth assessments remotely for the time being.
- We will respond to any compliance issues in line with our existing duty to be proportionate.

Update 14 May 2021: CORS response survey report for March survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our latest Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

This is the summary from the tenth and final collection of our temporary survey about how providers are managing some of the challenges they face as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The majority of providers reported completing all or most safety checks. The January dip in completing all, rather than most, gas safety checks has recovered. Almost all providers reported they had no material backlog in emergency repairs.

Update 25 February 2021: CORS response report for January survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our latest Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

Despite the introduction of a further national lockdown in January 2021, providers' responses showed that the delivery of services has remained

broadly stable since August 2020, with little evidence of significant deterioration.

The majority of providers reported completing all or most safety checks and have not reported any material issues with asbestos, electrical, legionella or lift checks. Across the sector, the reported gas safety compliance continues to be broadly back to pre-coronavirus levels.

Almost all providers reported they had no material backlog in emergency repairs. However, during the national lockdown, more providers reported moving to emergency repairs only. Some providers report they have extended their target timescales for completing non-emergency repairs, reflecting current challenges.

Update 7 January 2021: Regulatory update following January 2021 national lockdown announcement

Following the Government's recent announcement of a further national lockdown, we have reviewed our regulatory approach and we will continue with the successful arrangements we put in place in the second half of 2020 to adapt to coronavirus restrictions and the resulting challenges.

We will:

- complete our current work on stability checks
- continue to carry out in-depth assessments remotely – which have worked well
- continue our work on G2 and G3 assessments
- continue collecting [Quarterly Survey](#) data on the existing timescales
- move to bi-monthly collection of [Coronavirus Operational Response Survey data](#) as planned – we will review CORS again in the Spring.
- be proportionate and take full account of the circumstances when responding to compliance issues.

We will keep our approach under review over the coming months. If any provider has concerns about specific submission or in-depth assessment timings, for example if a scheduled in-depth assessment will be too disruptive, they should speak to their key contact at the regulator.

We recognise that this is a difficult time for everybody. Social housing providers have responded well to the challenges they have faced and we expect that to continue in the future. If a provider believes tenant safety is threatened or viability is under strain, they should speak to their key contact at the regulator, or our Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries team, via enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or 0300 124 5225. Providers with fewer than 1,000 homes should use our dedicated email address SmallProviders@rsh.gov.uk.

Update 17 December 2020: CORS response report for

November published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our eighth Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

Despite the introduction of additional national restrictions, providers' responses showed that the delivery of services remained stable in November.

The number of providers who had completed all or most gas safety, fire compliance, asbestos, electrical, legionella and lift checks was similar to the previous three months. Across the sector, gas safety compliance is reported to be broadly back to pre-coronavirus levels.

Almost all providers reported no material backlog in emergency repairs and the vast majority continued to deliver all responsive repairs in November. A minority reported that they had either paused non-emergency repairs during the additional national restrictions or that they have extended their target timescales for completing non-emergency repairs, reflecting current challenges.

Update 19 November 2020: CORS response report for October survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our seventh Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

Despite increased infection rates and the introduction of tiered lockdowns in parts of England, providers' responses showed that the delivery of services remained stable in October. The number of providers who had completed all or most gas safety, fire compliance, asbestos, electrical, legionella and lift checks was similar to the previous two months. Across the sector, gas safety compliance is reported to be broadly back to pre-coronavirus levels.

Providers' returns more generally noted the additional pressures that staff absence or contractor capacity have had on delivery of repairs. However, they have not reported material backlogs and appear to have appropriate mitigations in place including procuring additional staffing resource. Providers also continued to report small numbers of access issues where vulnerable tenants are shielding. They report that they are aware the second lockdown is likely to lead to renewed concerns among tenants about letting workers into their homes.

Update 22 October 2020: CORS response report for September survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our sixth Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

Providers' responses showed that the delivery of services remained stable. On care and support, most providers continued to report no significant issues

with staffing. The majority of providers have reported no issues with repairs delivery, and that backlogs in repairs and health and safety checks were continuing to improve overall.

Providers reported concerns about the second wave of coronavirus and additional lockdown restrictions potentially leading to increased staff absences and reduced overall capacity to deliver services. This may be particularly challenging over winter months as providers also anticipate increased repairs reporting.

Update 17 September 2020: CORS response report for August survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our fifth Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

Providers' responses show that the delivery of services remained stable and backlogs in repairs and health and safety checks were improving overall.

In areas with local lockdown restrictions, a small number of providers have reverted to an emergency-only repairs service, and reported some increasing backlogs in health and safety checks.

Update 6 August 2020: CORS response report for July survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our fourth Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

Providers' written responses show that the delivery of services is stable, and that work towards addressing backlogs has started.

The vast majority of providers are working through backlogs of non-emergency repairs in line with latest government guidance and generally report that backlogs are decreasing.

Update 23 July 2020: Updated MHCLG guidance on renting

The Government has published an updated version of its [COVID-19 and renting: guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities](#).

Update 9 July 2020: CORS response report for June survey published

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our third Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

The responses indicate the sector is continuing to maintain adequate levels

of service delivery in the areas surveyed and has begun work towards recovery.

Update 1 July 2020: Letter to large providers

We have emailed a [letter to large providers](#) (those with more than 1,000 units) with a regulatory update and information about the submission of regulatory returns.

Update 8 June 2020: CORS response report for May survey published

We have published our [report](#) following responses to our second Coronavirus Operational Response Survey.

The social housing sector is generally reporting that it is continuing to maintain service delivery for emergency repairs and essential health and safety checks, and that some of the challenges that it is facing have begun to ease. However, challenges with access to properties and the reduced reporting of repairs mean that backlogs of routine repairs and some safety checks continue to rise. Compared to April, a higher number of providers are reporting that they are currently completing most, rather than all, gas safety checks.

Social housing landlords responsible for care and support settings are reporting that they are continuing to maintain safe staffing levels and essential services. Absence rates appear to be recovering and providers generally appear to have successfully identified stable supply lines for PPE. Housing associations and local authorities are continuing to address the ongoing challenges with adapted approaches including remote working, continuing alternative deployments of staff and increased communication with tenants. In many cases, they are now also planning for recovery.

Update 1 June 2020: MHCLG guidance on renting

The Government has published [COVID-19 and renting: guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities](#).

Update 14 May 2020: Working in people's homes and house moves

The Government has published:

Update 7 May 2020: CORS response report published and potential disruption to publication of statistics

We have published a [report](#) following responses to our first Coronavirus

Operational Response Survey. The results show that housing associations and local authorities are working hard to maintain essential operations in the face of the impact of the virus and finding solutions to their most pressing challenges. These include redeploying staff, identifying new contractors and suppliers, and contacting more tenants by phone and by text, particularly tenants who are vulnerable.

Social housing landlords' report that they been able to access PPE, but supply and continuity is highly uncertain and they have concerns about the supply chain for other materials. Emergency repairs are being maintained, but backlogs of routine repairs and less critical safety checks are building up. Landlords also face challenges in carrying out safety checks where tenants need to shield themselves from the virus or are more generally afraid of providing access.

Providers responsible for care and support settings are reporting that they can maintain safe staffing levels and essential services. However, they highlight concerns about their ability to maintain safe staffing levels where there are outbreaks of coronavirus in the care setting itself, particularly where staff need to self isolate or due to illness, including anxiety and stress.

Statistical production

The current disruption to the UK as a result of the coronavirus outbreak could affect our ability to publish our statistics to the same timescales and to the same level of coverage as in previous years. See our [Statistical Data Return Collections page](#) for further information.

Update 1 May 2020: Letter to small registered providers

We have written to all small providers (with fewer than 1000 units) about changes to our regulatory approach during the Coronavirus crisis and how to contact us. The [letter to small providers](#) follows our [letter of 26 March 2020](#) to all registered providers.

Update 17 April 2020: Coronavirus Operational Response Survey and further guidance

Coronavirus Operational Response Survey

We have issued the first of our short monthly surveys via our online data collection portal [NROSH+](#) to all private registered providers of social housing with more than 1,000 properties, all stock-holding local authorities, and to some smaller private registered providers with over 500 properties and/or a high proportion of care and support activity.

The responses, alongside other information, will help us to identify where there may be challenges that the sector or individual providers need support

to meet and what potential assistance might be necessary.

We are encouraging providers to respond to the survey by the submission deadline of 24 April. However, where providers believe tenant safety is threatened or viability is under strain, they should inform their key contact at the regulator or our Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries team, via enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or 0300 124 5225, immediately.

Meeting local housing needs

We, along with many others, recognise the significant contribution that the sector is making, collectively and individually, to support the communities they work in during such unprecedented circumstances. Providers, as with many others, including local authorities, are facing a wide range of pressures and competing priorities.

We know that working closely with local authorities to support them in their role, is high on your list of priorities, not least in the efforts being made in relation to homelessness, rough sleeping and meeting other housing needs. We encourage all providers, where they are able to do so, to continue to support their local authority partners in such difficult times, in line with 2.1.1 of the [Tenancy Standard](#).

Gas safety advice for landlords

Gas servicing

The Health and Safety Executive has provided updated guidance on its expectations in relation to gas servicing. Our expectation is that registered providers follow that guidance. To clarify some of the queries we have received in respect of regulatory expectations on gas safety:

- Decisions to suspend gas servicing would not, in our view, be compliant with the HSE guidance.
- We are gathering information via the Coronavirus Operational Response Survey about the impact on providers' operations of the coronavirus.
- Where any provider (regardless of size) is being overwhelmed by the impact of coronavirus on their operations, they should contact us as a matter of urgency.
- Otherwise, assuming you are doing all the above, for the time being, we do not need providers to notify us as and when gas safety certificates are going out of date.

Updated guidance on lifts and personal protective equipment

Regulatory judgements

Please note: All of our currently published viability [judgements](#) are based on data which do not take account of any financial impact of the outbreak.

Update 8 April 2020: Further measures to reduce the regulatory burden

Following our [letter of 26 March 2020](#) to all registered providers and our [release of survey questions](#) yesterday, we confirm further measures to reduce the regulatory burden on registered providers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Postponing the deadline for the Financial Viability Assessment electronic accounts submission

We recognise that registered providers may face challenges in submitting their accounts to RSH within the 6 months after year-end deadline that is set in statute. Whilst we ask providers to take steps to submit their returns to us as soon as reasonably practicable, we will not take any action where returns due up until 30 September 2020 are delayed by up to 3 months i.e. to 31 December 2020. In line with this, we are postponing the deadline for Financial Viability Assessment electronic accounts submission deadline to 31 December 2020.

Expectations about value for money reporting

We will take a proportionate approach to value for money regulation to reduce the regulatory burden. We recognise that reporting on VFM in line with the regulatory standards could prove challenging in the current circumstances as organisations are having to make rapid decisions about how to reprioritise the use of their resources.

- Providers should calculate their VFM metrics from their accounts and report these as usual.
- We do not expect providers to spend time reflecting the impact of the current circumstances in their VFM commentary. If providers are unable to provide the level of reporting that they would otherwise have done, the regulator will take a proportionate response.

Regulatory judgements published during our pause of In-Depth Assessments

We have paused our programme of IDAs for the time being. We will continue to publish some remaining Regulatory judgements until the end of June 2020. These will be either based on:

- work that we had started before this pause, which is being completed with the consent of the provider concerned; or
- from on-going reactive engagement.

We will publish these Regulatory judgements as they are completed, rather than in our usual monthly publication batches.

We may publish other Regulatory judgements before we resume our programme of IDAs, for example following mergers or based on material reactive work unrelated to coronavirus.

We are also pausing our work to upgrade current G2 and G3 judgements, to allow us and providers to focus on responding to the challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic. We know that the providers concerned are working through actions to address issues identified in G2 and G3 judgements and this decision does not mean that the RSH has concerns about delivery of those improvements. We remain in touch with non-compliant providers to monitor their on-going progress.

Gas safety advice for landlords

The Health and safety executive has provided [further advice and guidance](#) about carrying out gas safety checks.

Update 7 April 2020: Survey on operational risks

We set out in our [recent letter to registered providers](#) that we would survey providers to understand how they are coping with the impact of coronavirus on specific operational risks.

The objective of the survey is to ensure that we have up-to-date information from providers on issues that the sector has told us are particular operational risks. We will use the survey results, alongside other information, to identify where risks are emerging, what potential mitigations might be necessary, and where there may be challenges that the sector or individual providers need regulatory support to meet. It is not about looking for non-compliance.

The survey will be hosted on our data collection portal [NROSH+](#), for all private registered providers with more than 1,000 homes, all local authority registered providers and some registered providers with fewer than 1,000 homes who we will be contacting shortly, to complete. It will ask providers to answer a single multiple-choice question on each of 5 key areas:

- Emergency repairs
- Statutory gas safety checks
- Statutory fire safety checks
- Asbestos, electrical, legionella and lift checks
- Care and support staffing levels.

For each area it will also ask them to identify any key constraints, risks and mitigating actions and the scale of any backlog.

We have published the survey questions on NROSH+ in advance to help providers prepare.

We will make the survey and supporting guidance available to providers to complete on NROSH+ from Friday 17 April. Providers should submit survey responses through NROSH+ covering the period up to and including 17 April, by Friday 24 April. We intend to repeat the survey monthly for as long as it remains necessary. The guidance will set out the planned timetable for future surveys and we will keep the required frequency under review.

Where providers are currently struggling to meet the challenges presented by coronavirus and there is a resulting threat to tenant safety or the provider's financial viability, they should contact us as soon as possible. Do not wait for the survey return to contact us.

Update 30 March 2020: MHCLG guidance

Further to our [letter to registered providers](#) last week, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has issued guidance for landlords and tenants including:

Update 26 March 2020: Letter to providers on changes to regulatory approach

The Coronavirus outbreak is causing very significant operational pressures for social housing providers. We are responding to this unprecedented situation by making changes to our regulatory approach, We are also setting out expectations for providers about contacting us if they are struggling to meet the challenges presented by Coronavirus and there is a resulting threat to tenant safety or the provider's financial viability. This is intended both to support providers in focussing on front-line operations and to identify where there may be challenges that the sector or individual providers need regulatory support to meet.

Across the sector, the shared priority is maintaining tenant safety. This includes addressing emergency and urgent repairs and statutory compliance with health and safety requirements.

Providers should also:

- manage risks to staff safety and follow wider guidance on limiting the spread of coronavirus
- tell us promptly about material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the regulatory standards focussing on health and safety, significant service delivery risks to vulnerable tenants, and financial viability.

In particular, they should tell us if they:

- either as a result of access issues, or a shortage of staff, are unable to deliver a minimum service to tenants; experience a shortage of staff which means that safe levels of staffing cannot be maintained in care, supported or vulnerable people's accommodation; or
- identify danger to tenants that cannot be rectified within reasonable timescales.

Providers must also continue to tell us about any viability issues they face.

To reduce the regulatory burden and refocus our regulation on the key risks at this time, we will:

- be proportionate and take full account of the circumstances when responding to compliance issues
- collect some information from providers about risks affecting tenant safety.
- extend our pause of In-Depth Assessments for the time being
- postpone submission deadlines for the Statistical Data Return, Local Authority Data Return and Financial Forecast Return
- continue to collect the Quarterly Survey to allow us to monitor sales, liquidity and cashflow pressures
- ask some providers who face higher risks to their finances to share their own cashflow monitoring information
- increase our engagement with providers and other stakeholders.

Full details are in our [letter to providers](#).

See the Contact us section on our homepage for our interim correspondence arrangements. You can continue to contact us by calling: 0300 124 5225 or emailing enquiries@rsh.gov.uk.

Statement update 17 March 2020: Pausing of In Depth Assessments

Following the Government extending the measures to limit the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) we have updated our approach to proactive regulatory engagement with registered providers.

We have paused our programme of In Depth Assessments of registered providers. This means that for the time being we are not starting any new IDAs. For those IDAs that are underway we are in contact with providers to either complete the IDA online or to defer. We will keep the position under review.

Registered providers are reminded that they are expected to communicate in a timely manner with the regulator on material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the [regulatory standards](#). As ever, our regulatory approach remains proportionate and we will take account of the circumstances, including those arising from the impact of coronavirus, in considering our response to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the standards.

Statement issued 6 March 2020

We expect all registered providers to prepare for the potential impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on residents, staff, contractors and suppliers. In doing so, ensure that you are following the latest advice and guidance from the Government and Public Health England available at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

The Regulator of Social Housing is operating as normal, including all of our planned and reactive regulatory engagement, and will continue to do so unless Government guidance changes and means that we need to modify our business

operations.

Registered providers are reminded that they are expected to communicate in a timely manner with the regulator on material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the [regulatory standards](#). As ever, our regulatory approach remains proportionate and we will take account of the circumstances, including those arising from the impact of coronavirus, in considering our response to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the standards.