

**Coronavirus information exchange for GWSF members**

Update 9, 6/4/20

Please feel free to get in touch on any of the issues raised below, and where appropriate we’ll share views and information with members, non-attributably.

**Maintenance contracts – HAs contracting with Mears Property Services**

Whilst the associations approached by Mears on the issue of maintaining normal contract payments have been keeping in touch with each other, it looks like each will come to its own decision as the issues and circumstances can be different from one to another. Some have advised Mears of the decision they have come to whilst others are still considering things.

**Allocations**

In the last update we said we had started to hear some talk of ‘contactless lettings’ but had no detail. One member association has commented as follows:

‘We are attempting the mythical ‘contactless’ lettings. This has not yet been tried though in full and we don’t know how well it will work.

* The allocation side should be straightforward so long as the applicant has email or similar or lives locally so we can pick up any required information (this should be most of our applicants).  We are also happy to do everything over the phone where possible.
* We firmly believe that no applicant should miss out on an offer if they are top of the list just now, so irrespective of any future temp lets to Councils for emergency accommodation or similar, we are matching applicants at the top of the list to voids just now.
* We normally carry out an accompanied viewings, we will now be using a live stream or pre filmed video from an ipad.  Again, will only work if the applicant has access to this technology.
* For the sign up, we will again use email or explain everything over the phone, with a ‘contactless’ visit arranged to sign the missive.

On utilities, we partner with British Gas void care who sort out all meter and debt issues, however this has yet to be tested in the current circumstances and we are unsure as to whether or not the void care team will be able to fulfil everything at their end.  The other barrier is legionella testing where our contractor is currently self-isolating and we are trying to get an alternative in place.

We appreciate that this approach to lettings may not work in all cases, but feel we can adapt as required to keep things going as best we can.  The true conundrum is likely to be current tenants’ inability to move out as opposed to anything else, which of course brings the whole thing to a halt.  The other issue being contractor availability for voids, which is fine for us just now, but this could be affected going forward.

Talk is cheap as they say and we have no actual success of the complete process as we have been lucky enough to have only one void carried forward into this financial year.  I appreciate that some will wade in with a million reasons why none of the above will work as well, however unless we try we won’t know.’

**Additional support for tenants**

Our thanks to Alan Benson of Milnbank HA for providing this example of a service they have made available to everyone in their community. [A flier is also attached separately with this Update.]

‘Please see attached details of a service MHA has just introduced. I’m forwarding this as I think would be of use to GWSF members.

This provides for telephone support for a range of issues.  The Management Committee were looking at this prior to the current crisis, particularly as they felt there was a lack of support, especially around mental health.  However, we’ve agreed to go forward with the service immediately.

The Committee were attracted to this service through its connection to the Co-operative Movement.  It was obviously important for the Committee to deal with those that shared our community based values. (This service originated in Birmingham I think).

We’ve made provision for 3100 households to access the service.  This includes all tenants and factored owners as well as staff.  Anyone in the household has access and for the service user it’s completely free and confidential. The cost, including VAT, is £18,600 for a year which works out at £6 per property.  Having researched this service, I think it will be really useful in a community based housing context.

Further contact details: Paul Barry paul@assuredbenefitsgroup.co.uk

                         Steven Purcell steven@twentyten.associates

 Alan Benson a.benson@milnbank.org.uk



**To all in the Milnbank HA Community**

2 April 2020

Dear Resident,

**Community Wellbeing Service**

Please see enclosed information regarding a community wellbeing service, which is now available to all Milnbank HA residents.

The service is free and confidential and provides telephone support covering a range of health and related issues. To access the service follow the instructions below.

The introduction of this service was being considered by the Management Committee before the current difficulties caused by the Coronavirus, but the Association now feels this additional support is required immediately. The service is available to anyone in your household and residents may be interested to learn that it has its roots in the Co-operative Movement.

On behalf of Milnbank HA I would encourage local residents to use this service if required and to stay safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yours faithfully,



Allan Scott,

Chair, Milnbank HA Management Committee.

**Telephone Access (Free phone number)**

* All users can dial 0800 107 6147
* 24 hours per day
* When asked, simply say that they are calling from **Milnbank Housing Association**

**Website access**

* www.assuredbenefitsgroup.co.uk/milnbank-ha-wellbeing/
* Password: Milnbank HA
NOTE: Type password exactly as shown. Include the space and capital letters.