

## **Private Sector Housing Team Service Update**

As the world continues to move towards some level of normality, the Private Sector Housing Team recognises the need to continue to provide services to our landlords, while adapting to new ways of working. The Private Sector Housing Team are now able to resume some of their temporarily suspended services in order to continue to support their landlords and tenants. These are highlighted below.

Unfortunately there are some services which remain suspended, however the team are currently looking at ways in which we can bring these services back virtually to help keep our landlords and tenants safe. We will send further updates in relation to these services.

### **Priority Services**

The Private Sector Housing Team will aim to continue to offer the following priority services to our customers throughout the Pandemic.

#### **Illegal evictions and harassment:**

- The Private Sector Housing Team will continue to deal with reports and queries in relation to harassment and illegal evictions. For up to date information on this, landlords should visit:  
<https://www.rla.org.uk/campaigns/coronavirus/changes-to-possession/index.shtml>

#### **Issuing Advice/Sign post landlords for help with their properties and tenants in relation to COVID-19 issues.**

- It is important now more than ever that landlords keep up to date with all relevant developments in relation to COVID-19 and how this might affect their business. We will aim to provide useful resources and updates to enable landlords to do this.

### **Reinstated services**

The Private Sector Housing Team have now resumed the following services but with alterations for health and safety purposes.

- **Property Accreditation Inspections - Empty properties only**  
We are now able to carry out property inspections in relation to property accreditation. In order to carry out these inspections safely we will need to complete a pre-inspection check list with you prior to visiting your property. If you are interested in having your property accredited, please don't hesitate to contact us on the numbers below for a further discussion and to find out how the inspections will take place under the new guidelines.

A copy of the check list is attached to this email. This is a working document and may change and as things progress. We will keep you informed of any changes.

- **Property Advertising**

As we are now able to begin accrediting properties again, we can now also begin to advertise properties for landlords whose properties pass their inspection.

- **Rent Deposit Guarantee Inventory Inspections - Empty properties only**

We can now carry out inventories again in relation to our rent deposit guarantee scheme (RDGS). The RDGS is only available for properties which have been accredited by Northumberland County Council. In order to minimise the number of times we visit your property, we will carry out the accreditation inspection and the inventory at the same time. As such appointments may take slightly longer.

- **Tenant Referencing**

We are now able to carry out tenant referencing with some alterations for health and safety purposes. Turn around times for referencing may also be slightly longer due to delays with the post. Tenant referencing through Northumberland County Council is only available where a tenant is moving into an accredited property.

For further information on any of the above services, please do not hesitate to make contact using the below telephone numbers, any member of the team will be happy to help you.

### **Temporarily suspended services**

In the interest of health and safety the Private Sector Housing Team have made the decision to temporarily suspend the following services:

#### **Landlord Forums and Training Events**

- Again, with a view to adhering to government guidelines regarding social distancing, the team have suspended all forums and training until further notice. You can contact the Private Sector Team if you have any queries regarding this. We are currently exploring options to host virtual forms and training events and online training may be available through organisations such as the NRLA.

#### **Landlord Steering Group Meetings**

- Our landlord steering group meetings will also be suspended until further notice. The Private Sector Team is currently exploring whether these types of meetings could be held virtually.

The Private Sector Housing Team are currently working from home in order to minimise social contact, but will be contactable on the numbers and email address below, should you have any questions about our services and how these will operate over the coming weeks and months.

**Vicky Ledger:** 01670 623053 or 07795 854900 (non working day Monday)

**Jo Saynor:** 01670 624526 or 07825242741

**Gary McGuire:** 01670 623071 or 07767 003116

**Kirsty Douglas:** 01670 623073 or 07966 330972 (*non working days are Tuesday and Wednesday*)

**Abby Henderson-Rowan:** 01670 623060 or 07966323987 (*non working day is Wednesday*)

**Lynne Dempsey:** 07833 083978

**Kirsty Gilmartin:** 07767007497 (non working days are Thursday and Friday)

**Email:** [privatesectorhousing@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:privatesectorhousing@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Contact Centre:** 0345 600 6400

### **Useful Information for Landlords**

The situation in relation to COVID-19 is changing on a daily basis. Emergency legislation now exists that directly affects landlords in relation to things such as evictions.

It is vital at this time that you refer to official, reliable resources to keep up to date with all relevant developments. It is also important for keeping you and your tenants safe.

The following organisations and websites can be referred to for up to date information:

<https://www.rla.org.uk/campaigns/coronavirus/index.shtml>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government#housing>