

Advice for landlords and tenants during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak



Government has now brought the Coronavirus Act 2020 into force. This act implements a number of temporary changes to the way the private rented sector operates.

The following key points are taken from government guidance published in March 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

For comprehensive advice please refer to the full guidance document by clicking [here](#):

Key advice from Mid Devon District Council:

- Until 30th September 2020, most landlords will not be able to start possession proceedings.
- There is a suspension of housing possession cases in the courts – this affects new or existing claims for possession for a 90 day period from 27th March.
- Landlords are strongly advised not to commence new notices seeking possession during this challenging time without a very good reason to do so.
- Nobody can be removed from their home because of the virus.
- Landlords are not obliged to provide alternative accommodation for tenants if others in the property contract the virus.
- Tenants have a right to a decent, warm and safe place to live - it is in the best interests of both tenants and landlords to ensure that properties are kept in good repair and free from hazards.
- Landlords' repair obligations have not changed.
- Planned inspections may be more difficult at this time. However, that is no reason to allow dangerous conditions to persist.
- Enforcement is to take action such as a prosecution or serve a civil penalty where a notice or order has been served and not complied with. In Mid Devon this activity may be delayed, working with landlords and allowing longer periods for compliance.
- In Mid Devon, where an inspection has been carried out and serious hazards have been identified (category 1 hazards), a notice or order will still be served but with longer start dates and compliance dates to take account of the COVID-19 restrictions.

- Landlords will not be unfairly penalised where COVID-19 restrictions prevent them from meeting compliance dates but should keep the local authority informed of serious delays or issues.
- Where reasonable, safe for you and in line with other Government guidance, www.gov.uk/coronavirus you should allow local authorities, landlords or contractors access to your property in order to inspect or remedy urgent health and safety issues.
- Urgent health and safety issues are those which will affect a tenant's ability to live safely and maintain mental and physical health in their home. This could include **(but is not limited to)**: –
 - If there is a problem with the fabric of the building, for example the roof is leaking
 - If the boiler is broken, leaving a tenant without heating or hot water
 - If there is a plumbing issue, meaning there are no working washing or toilet facilities
 - If the white goods such as fridge or washing machine have broken, meaning tenants are unable to wash clothes or store food safely
 - If there is a security-critical problem, such as a broken window or external door
 - If equipment a disabled person relies on requires installation or repair
- Inspectors or maintenance workers can still visit blocks of flats and multi-occupied properties for essential or urgent work such as inspecting and testing fire alarm and emergency lighting systems.
- Specific advice for work being carried out in people's homes can be found [here](#)
- If you are not able to gain access to the property due to restrictions in place to tackle COVID-19, or are not able to engage a contractor to carry out the necessary work, we recommend you document your attempts to do so and all correspondence with your tenants.
- Tenants should continue to pay rent and abide by all other terms of their tenancy agreement to the best of their ability.
- Landlords and tenants should work together to agree an affordable rent repayment plan if their tenants fall into rent arrears.
- If a tenant is worried about being evicted and not having anywhere else to go, they should speak to the local authority.
- **Note: if you require advice on individual cases, or you are worried you may have been illegally evicted, contact should be made to a free, impartial advice service such as Citizens Advice or Shelter.**