



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

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***Department for Levelling up, Housing and
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7 December 2021

Dear Landlord

The [COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021](#) was published on 14 September. This plan sets out the Government's aims to sustain the progress made in tackling the virus and prepare the country for future challenges, while ensuring the NHS does not come under substantial pressure during this period.

Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). When someone with COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release particles (droplets and aerosols) containing the virus that causes COVID-19. In poorly ventilated rooms the amount of virus in the air can build up, increasing the risk of spreading COVID-19.

Good ventilation will not only help reduce transmission of the virus but will also help reduce condensation, dampness, mould and fungal growth and dust mites.

In addition to cascading this letter and attached materials to social landlords, given that local authorities are the regulator of standards in the private rented sector, we also ask that you further cascade the message to private landlords. We recommend that this is done, for example, through landlord forums and to landlords of licensed properties.

Key messages for Landlords

If you have responsibility as a landlord, whether in the Social Rented Sector or Private Rental Sector, we ask that you help us in our efforts to encourage behaviours to help combat the virus and cascade the message of the importance of good ventilation to your residents. Included in this letter is a summary of the key messages for residents, from the guidance, and a toolkit of additional materials to cascade through relevant channels.

To support the health of your residents, there are several things you, as a landlord, should do to enable ventilation in and around your residents' homes:

- Ensure that all habitable rooms have functioning openable windows (including providing replacement keys where these have been misplaced/lost) – ideally with opening areas of at least 1/20th of the floor area;
- Ensure that all bathrooms/kitchens have either functioning openable windows and/or (preferably both) appropriate functioning extract ventilation;

- Consider installing positive pressure or constant run ventilation systems to ensure there is adequate background ventilation and to reduce the likelihood of condensation, and ensure that such systems are operating effectively, with filters etc replaced at appropriate intervals;
- Ensure that tenants have clear instructions and understand how to operate ventilation and heating systems, and are advised on the best ways to achieve a healthy and economic balance of heating, ventilation and moisture production within the home;
- Ensure that problems with damp are fully investigated and addressed promptly.

We also request that you prioritise as far as possible any planned or known works that might improve ventilation, such as repairing broken safety catches on windows for those concerned about security or a fall hazard.

Opening windows for an extended period of time may present certain issues for residents – including health issues. We would ask that those cascading this advice exercise your professional judgement in caveats in relation to this guidance, based on your specific residents/housing.

This guidance does not cover single person households, though we would advise that single households still follow guidance if they have visitors in their home.

We are aware that some residents will be reticent to ventilate their homes in the winter temperatures, especially in the current climate of rising fuel costs. Therefore, we would recommend sharing the below options for support (this is also included in the summary of key messages for residents).

There is advice available about how to keep warm and well. If your residents are having difficulty heating their homes, they may be able to claim financial and practical help. Residents should visit the Simple Energy Advice website for information about the help that is available or call their helpline on 0800 444 202. Ofgem has further advice on what to do if they are struggling to pay their energy bills.

Depending on their circumstances and other criteria, they may also be eligible for support with their energy bills:

- The Warm Home Discount supports low income and vulnerable households. Please see the [Warm Home Discount](#) webpages for further information on eligibility and how to apply for the scheme.
- The Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payment also help vulnerable households with their winter energy costs. Please check the [Cold Weather Payment](#) and the [Winter Fuel Payment](#) webpages for more information.

If they are in financial distress during this time, they should talk to their energy supplier, who will be able to discuss personal circumstances and consider options to help, including reassessing, reducing or pausing payments.

Thank you for your support in spreading awareness on the importance of ventilation to your residents.

*Yours Sincerely,
Christopher Pincher*

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Summary of key messages for residents

The importance of ventilation

- It is important to ventilate your home when you have visitors from outside your household – including family, or if someone in your household has COVID-19.
- Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Ventilation is important if someone in your household has COVID-19 or if you are indoors with people you do not live with. You can pass COVID-19 on to others if you only have mild symptoms or even no symptoms at all.

How to ventilate your home

- Opening windows and doors at home is the simplest way of improving ventilation.
- If you have people working in or visiting your home, let as much fresh air into your home as possible without getting uncomfortably cold while they are there, and for a short period before they arrive and after they have left
- If someone in your home is self-isolating, keep a window slightly open in their room and keep the door closed to reduce the spread of contaminated air to other parts of the household. If the person self-isolating needs access to shared spaces in your home, ensure that these areas are well ventilated by following the guidance above.
- Ventilation can be increased by leaving extractor fans in bathrooms, toilets and kitchen areas running for longer than usual, with the door closed, after someone has been in the room.
- In the winter months, it is crucial that ventilation, such as trickle vents on windows, are not blocked and that other ventilation is not switched off. These actions will have minimal implications for heating costs but put you at more risk from COVID-19 transmission.

Mechanical ventilation in the home

- If your home has a mechanical ventilation system, make sure this is working and maintained in line with manufacturers' instructions. Your landlord will be able to tell you how to check the ventilation system is working.
- If possible, set ventilation systems to bring fresh air in and not recirculate indoor air. If you are unsure of how to do this, seek guidance from your landlord. Devices that only recirculate indoor air will not remove airborne virus from the home. You can use the boost mode (if available) to increase ventilation if someone in your household is self-isolating due to COVID-19 or if you meet people you do not live with indoors.
- Ventilation can also be increased by leaving extractor fans in bathrooms, toilets and kitchen areas running for longer than usual, with the door closed, after someone with COVID-19 or a visitor has been in the room.
- If necessary, to ensure safety, we would advise that you latch windows – this will allow ventilation whilst reducing safety risks.

How to keep warm

- Ventilation does not mean you have to be cold – opening your windows for just 10 minutes an hour can help reduce the risk and allow the air to refresh.
- In colder weather, where it is not comfortable to leave windows open fully, opening the windows slightly can also provide ventilation and reduce cold drafts.

Support for low income/vulnerable residents

- There is advice available about how to keep warm and well. If you are having difficulty heating your home, you may be able to claim financial and practical help even if you don't own the property. Visit the Simple Energy Advice website for information about the help that is available or call their helpline on 0800 444 202. Ofgem has further advice on what to do if you are struggling to pay your energy bills.
- Depending on your circumstances and other criteria, you may also be eligible for support with your energy bills:
 - The Warm Home Discount supports low income and vulnerable households. Please see the [Warm Home Discount](#) webpages for further information on eligibility and how to apply for the scheme.
 - The Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payment also help vulnerable households with their winter energy costs. Please check the [Cold Weather Payment](#) and the [Winter Fuel Payment](#) webpages for more information.
- If you are in financial distress during this time should, you should talk to your energy supplier, who will be able to discuss personal circumstances and consider options to help, including reassessing, reducing or pausing payments.

More information can be found in our guidance: Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).