

# *We are here for you*



Pentland Housing Association closed its office premises to the public until further notice back in March in line with Government advice. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused however our priority is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, tenants and clients. While our office is still closed our staff are working in the background to continue to provide our services, however this may result in slight delays in responding to e-mails and/or telephone calls.

We are now providing our services via telephone, email and on our website. We will keep you updated on the situation and we appreciate your patience at this difficult time.

Please visit our website [www.pentlandhousing.co.uk](http://www.pentlandhousing.co.uk) for updates

## How we are looking after our staff

- We are reviewing the roles and responsibilities of our staff so we can ensure all of our services are continued to be provided at a good standard.
- Our staff are working from home therefore there may be a delay in responding to emails/calls
- We are sourcing PPE for our staff when the office does re open
- We are ensuring our policies and procedures are being updated in line with the Covid 19 situation



## Keeping in touch

Pentland Housing have been keeping in touch with our vulnerable tenants to see if there is any way we can provide assistance from a 'wee chat' to signposting to support groups and services. Please note as we are working from home our calls may show as a mobile or unknown number.

Please be aware of some of the current scams which are happening at the moment and that the PHA would never ask for your bank details. If you are unsure of any calls which may or may not be Pentland Housing, please end the call and phone our office number **01847 892507** to confirm.

## Support with Your Finances

The Government have announced wide ranging financial assistance packages for businesses, employers and renters. Please refer to - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> to ensure you are making applications to maximise your entitlement.

Pentland Housing Association are looking to introduce a limited hardship fund that we will operate during the Coronavirus crisis period to provide assistance to those tenants who are finding it difficult to cope financially due to a related loss of income.

The sort of items that would qualify for a hardship grant are:

- Food
- Help with energy bills
- Connection to Broadband to maintain contact with relatives
- Mobile phone bills (in exceptional circumstances such as domestic violence cases)
- Short term rental support (for those not eligible for UC or Housing benefit)

If you feel you are experiencing financial hardship due to causes that have not been addressed by measures already in place, please ask for a leaflet for further information.



### Important Office Number Numbers

Office – 01847 892507

**Please follow the automated message to chose from one for the following**

Option 1 –to report a repairNHS  
Equipment/Handyperson  
Service/Wheel Chair  
Services

Option 2 – to speak to a  
Housing Officer

Option 3 – to speak to the  
Care & Repair Officer

Option 4 – for anything other  
please press 4.

**Emergency (out of hours) –  
07802 930 685**

## Household Fuel Fund

Scarf has partnered with Home Energy Scotland to launch a new emergency hardship fund that aims to help the most vulnerable households across the North East access funds to help heat their homes in these difficult times.

The Scarf Heat Fund will help provide instant access to heat to those most at risk of, or suffering from, fuel poverty.

The fund can provide help and support in the form of:

- Plug-in Heaters
- Prepayment
- Access to costs for emergency boiler repairs

For more information please visit [www.scarf.org.uk](http://www.scarf.org.uk)

# Latest News from our Estates Department



## Planned Maintenance

All planned Maintenance programs are now on hold until such times as the lockdown is lifted, or the government releases further guidance

## Day to Day and Emergency Repairs

We are only carrying out emergency repairs, and responding to heating failures, or any request that may cause a health and safety risk to our tenants or their properties. Any non-essential repairs reported are being logged and we hope to be able to schedule these as soon as possible when the rules around lockdown have been relaxed

## Ground Maintenance

We continue to carry out ground maintenance, but this has been reduced to only grass cutting in communal areas on a reduced number of visits as is assessed to be necessary



## Annual Gas Safety Checks

Gas safety checks are continuing in line with government social distancing guidance, this will be up-dated as and when guidance changes

## Handyperson &



## Care & Repair Services

Our Handypersons service continues to operate responding only to essential works requests. All requests are assessed around necessity and the ability to carry out any requests maintaining the Governments guidance on social distancing. Any non-essential repairs reported are being logged and we hope to be able to schedule these as soon as possible when the rules around lockdown have been relaxed.

All property adaptations are on hold at the moment and will resume in line with government guidance. Our Care and Repair officer continues to respond to client requests and continues to work with clients in the preparation of grant application packages for required adaptation works

# Update from our Housing Department



## Rent Payments

Please continue to pay your rent as normal by:

- Direct debit
- Bank payment
- Standing order

Or phone the office on **01847 892507** and we will arrange to take a payment from you via debit card.

*If you have any problems with making your rent payment or can only manage to pay a part of your monthly rent please see our article on arrears and do not hesitate to contact us as we are here to help.*

## Arrears

Rent arrears can happen to any tenant, at any time, but it is extremely important to act quickly if it does.

Please talk to us, please don't ignore the arrears, or us, we are here to help you find a solution.



We can discuss various ways of paying your arrears and assist you in getting the correct financial advice, to claim the correct benefits, if needed.

If you don't contact us and the rent arrears are not paid then you could lose your home. We really do not want this to happen so please let us help.

Contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

**Yvonne (01847) 807111 or Gael (01847) 807109**

## Lettings

In response to the coronavirus outbreak we have suspended allocations and mutual exchanges. However, delays to allocations risk the safety of some of our most vulnerable groups so to ensure the provision of safe and suitable accommodation to those facing homelessness we continue to work with The Highland Council. People experiencing homelessness face significant challenges to protect themselves from COVID-19 infection. The Highland Council has a statutory obligation around homelessness and are required to provide accommodation for homeless people either by making use of Council housing or by obtaining accommodation from other providers such as ourselves who have a duty to support The Highland Council and to comply with requests to provide accommodation unless there is a good reason for not doing so.

Should you or anyone you know find themselves in a position of homelessness or potential homelessness please contact the office immediately so we can offer advice and support.

We are continuing to accept and process housing applications. You can complete an application on-line via The Highland Council website or contact your Housing Officer and they can arrange to post a housing application pack to you.

**Yvonne (01847) 807111 or Gael (01847) 807109**



## Money Advice

If you are claiming Universal Credit for the first time the Government has provided funding to CAB for a Help to Claim project which means they can help you from the first phone call all the way through until you receive your first payment, to access this advise please call 08000232581.

Are you having problems with rent payments, perhaps your income has reduced because of the current situation if so we can refer you to our Money Advice Worker, to give you specialist advice.

They can do an assessment to ensure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to and help you to manage your money effectively.

The service is completely confidential.

If you are interested in seeing our Money Advice Worker, please contact your Housing Officer who will be happy to refer you.

### Anti-Social Behaviour:

Although our main office is currently closed, Pentland Housing Association continue to work alongside multiple agencies to minimise reports of ant-social behaviour. If you happen to be experiencing any form of anti-social behaviour and would like to report to us please do so by telephoning 01847 892507 or via email [PHA@pentlandhousing.co.uk](mailto:PHA@pentlandhousing.co.uk), alternatively you can contact your designated Housing Officer.

### Domestic Abuse:

During the COVID-19 period, Caithness & Sutherland Women's Aid (CASWA) are continuing to provide outreach services and refuge accommodation to women, children & young people experiencing domestic abuse. They provide specialised safety planning, support planning, advocacy, emotional & practical support tailored to individual needs. They are also accepting new referrals, should you require to be referred you can do this by contacting your Pentland Housing Association Housing Officer, Police Scotland on 999 or CASWA themselves in the following ways:

Email: [info@caswa.org.uk](mailto:info@caswa.org.uk)

Telephone: 0345 408 0151

Website: [www.caswa.org.uk](http://www.caswa.org.uk)

Scotland's 24 hour Domestic Abuse helpline:  
0800 027 1234

# Useful Information

Thurso: 01847 894 243  
Wick: 01955 605 989



Health and social care -  
08457 697284

Roads, parks, flooding  
and street lighting -  
01349 886690

Housing, homelessness,  
and public buildings –  
01349 886691

Registration - 07818  
588 203

NHS 24 - Call free on 111 if you are ill and it can't wait until your regular NHS service reopens

SEPA Floodline:  
0345 988 1188

SEPA Pollution:  
0800 807060

Scottish and Southern Electric:  
0800 300 999

Scottish Water:  
0845 601 8855

Gas Freephone:  
0800 111 999

**In an emergency dial 999** for the police, fire and ambulance service.

**For non-emergencies,** you can contact the police on 101 and the fire service on 01382 835804 (24 hours).

Universal Credit – 0800 328 5644  
Scottish Welfare Fund – 0800 083 1887  
Samartins – 116 123

## Caithness Support Groups and Services

Through out Caithness there are various support groups and services available for those in need of assistance

Wick - PultneyTowns People Project have set up a services for those in need of assistance  
Please call Carlene Rosie on 07921411570

Thurso - Thurso Community Development Trust, Urgent assistance only on 01847 867050

Please stay home, stay safe and follow the government guidelines

For further updates please check our website at [www.pentlandhousing.co.uk](http://www.pentlandhousing.co.uk)

Office Number – 01847 892507    Emergency Number – 07802 930 685  
Website – [www.pentlandhousing.co.uk](http://www.pentlandhousing.co.uk)