

## Our services from June 2021

It's good news that the UK is opening up – but the pandemic is not over yet. We are continuing to keep your safety and the safety of our staff at the top of our priority list.

### How we are working

We have adopted an 'agile working' policy, which gives our staff the flexibility to work from a variety of locations, including their own homes. They no longer need to keep returning to a fixed base.

Although we introduced this change because of the pandemic, we now want it to be permanent. We think it helps us to work better and provide better services to tenants and other service users.



### Covid-19 in your home?

If you, or anyone else in your home tests positive for Covid-19, please let us know. We want to offer you support and make sure others stay safe.

### Office visits

Our staff are spending more time at the office, but we are still limiting face-to-face contact.

We are making only a limited number of office appointments available for tenants.

So, if you need our assistance, you should first call 020 8524 6987 and leave a message. We will call you back as soon as we can.

When upgrades to our phone system go live, you should be able to go directly to the person you need to speak to (see page 2).



### Repairs and maintenance

Our repairs and maintenance service is running normally. However, some jobs may be delayed if our contractors have trouble getting supplies.

Our gas contractors, Swale Heating, are carrying out annual gas safety checks as normal. Please give them access when they send you an appointment, or phone them on 01795 503365 to arrange a more convenient time.

Our contractors take care not to put you at risk. They may ask you to wait in another room. Please tell them in advance if anyone in your home has coronavirus symptoms.

### Cleaning and other services

Our cleaning schedules are still running normally.

Where necessary, we can get our cleaners to do extra sanitising work, or a full deep clean.



# Our purpose, vision and values

**Our social purpose** is to provide housing and support services for vulnerable people.

**Our vision:** WFHA is working to deliver a future where everyone, in every community we serve, has a safe, truly affordable home and great life chances, in a society where they are valued and respected.



## **we RESPECT**

People and communities through our belief in equality, inclusion and the value of diversity. We believe we have more in common than things that separate us.



## **we EMPOWER**

People and communities by maximising strengths and opportunities and building resilience.



## **we are AMBITIOUS**

Constantly improving, delivering better value for money and striving to provide more homes and services.



## **we CARE**

About what we do, step up to take responsibility and are passionate about our social purpose and making a positive difference.



## **we are HONEST**

Act with integrity and are accountable to our tenants, our partners and each other.

**REACH.** Oxford Dictionary definition: *(verb)* 1. Stretch out so as to touch or grasp something. 2. Be able to touch something. 3. Arrive at or get as far as. 4. Achieve or come to a particular point or state. 5. Make contact with. *(noun)* 1. The distance to which someone can stretch to touch something. 2. The extent to which someone or something has power, influence or the ability to do something.

## Changes to our phone system

The way we answer your phone calls will soon be changing.

We are about to upgrade our phone system to make it more efficient for you and us.

In future, when you call us, you will have the option to select a number to get through to the department you want to speak to.

By taking you directly to the right person, we aim to give you the assistance you need much more quickly.

*Your feedback on this service change would be very welcome.*



**You should still phone us on 020 8524 6987**



## Don't risk being recharged

**Our rechargeable repairs policy means that we will pass on our costs if:**

- you are not at home for your appointment, or
- you misuse our out-of-hours repairs service.

The out-of-hours repairs service is for emergencies only – that is, where health and safety, or the fabric of the building are at risk.

Recently, our contractors have attended emergencies where the tenant was not at home to give access.

They have also been called out where there is no emergency.

In both cases, you might now be charged.

Remember, the emergency service is designed to make sure homes and residents are safe. Contractors will often do a 'make-safe' emergency repair and return later to complete it.

You will not get your routine repair done more quickly by calling our out-of-hours phone number.



## Paying your rent

If you're struggling to pay your rent, call us. There are things we can do to help.

The pandemic eviction ban ended at the end of May, so some of you will again be getting notices of court action. Be aware that it now takes four months, not six to complete this process.

If you are getting behind with your rent, please ring or email us urgently – we can offer more help than you might think and we are keen to help.

When you talk to us, we will start by looking at all your options. We have already helped residents like you to sort out their arrears.

For example, people often don't know that they can claim a Discretionary Housing Payment from their council, on top of their Universal Credit.

These payments are particularly designed to help people who are:

- affected by the benefit cap, or
- losing benefit because of the bedroom tax.

You don't need to repay a Discretionary Housing Payment.

Call 020 8524 6987, to find out more, or email [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk)

## No personal items in communal areas

**We are still finding people's personal belongings in some shared areas. For fire safety reasons, we cannot allow this.**

As a responsible landlord, we take a zero tolerance approach to items being left where they should not be left. Anything we find can be removed without warning you first. We will pass on any costs involved to the person responsible.

# Covid vaccinations: Should you get the jab?

As a housing association in a diverse area of London, we have been worried that so many Black and Asian people say they might not get vaccinated.

## Covid in our ethnic minority communities

Covid-19 has proved to be much more dangerous for some communities.

For a range of reasons, if you are Black or Asian, you are nearly twice as likely to die if you catch the disease.

Early in the pandemic, as many as 72% of Black people and 42% of Asians thought they might not get vaccinated.

By 2021, this figure for Black people had fallen to 30% and Asians were also getting jabbed in higher than expected numbers. However, there are still concerns about what younger people might decide.

## Need to know more first?

A few weeks ago, we sent you a leaflet with more information. It examines a range of reasons why different groups are concerned about getting the jab. It explains why we think you should say 'yes', when you are offered a vaccine.

You can also view this information on our website at [wfha.org.uk/covid-19-vaccinations](http://wfha.org.uk/covid-19-vaccinations)



## Covid-19 vaccinations Need to know more first?



# Calls to check you are safe and well

If you would like a regular call from us, please phone 020 8524 6987.

The staff member who takes your call will put you on our phone call list. They will also ask if we can help you with anything else.

If English is not your first language, we can help by providing a translator on the phone. Let us know if you need this service.

## Are you in danger?

Being stuck at home can be dangerous for some people.

If someone is abusing you or another member of your household in any way, do try to call us. We will do all we can to help you.

If you are in danger and unable to talk on your mobile phone, call 999. When prompted press 55. This will transfer your call to the police.

On a landline, your silent call will be connected to the police. They can see the location of your phone and can take action without you speaking.



## Stay safe as Waltham Forest reopens

From Monday 17 May, many Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

- Businesses including pubs and restaurants are now serving people indoors.
- People can meet in groups of up to 30 outside.
- Six people or two households can meet indoors, and stay overnight.
- Up to 30 people can attend weddings and wakes.

At WFHA, we are providing your services in line with guidelines from the Government and our regulator (see front page).

### Take care

Infection rates are currently low in most of the country and more than 4m Londoners have had their first jab. About half have also had their second jab.

However, Covid-19 has not gone away, so please stick to the rules. Remember to give your neighbours space when you are in communal areas. We also recommend getting vaccinated when it's your turn (see page 4).

Pictured above: Stalls in Walthamstow Market reopening after the first lockdown last year.



HM Government

Let's keep letting fresh air in to help stop the spread.

NHS



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

# A better deal for tenants

Since the fire at Grenfell Tower four years ago, the Government and the National Housing Federation have been looking at how landlords work with their tenants.

## As a result:

- the Government has drawn up the **Social Housing White Paper**, and
- the National Housing Federation has launched the **Together with Tenants** scheme.

Both will affect how we work with you in future.

## Social Housing White Paper

The Government's Social Housing White Paper aims to reset the landlord/tenant relationship.

At its heart is a new Tenant Charter. In future, as a tenant, you should expect:

1. **To be safe in your home**
2. **To know how your landlord is performing**
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly**
4. **To be treated with respect**
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord**
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in**
7. **To be supported into home ownership if you want this**

In addition, there are plans for new regulation, a strengthened Housing Ombudsman to speed up complaints, and tenant satisfaction measures we will have to report against.

## National Housing Federation:

### Together with Tenants

The National Housing Federation has a four-point plan for change for housing association residents.

#### The plan includes:

1. A new requirement in its Code of Governance, making Boards accountable to their residents
2. A new Together with Tenants charter – which focuses on landlord-tenant relationships, good communication, giving tenants a voice and influence, accountability, good quality homes and effective complaints systems
3. Resident oversight and reporting of progress against the charter
4. Giving residents a stronger collective voice with the housing regulator

Over the next few months, we will be discussing these issues with tenants of Waltham Forest Housing Association.



# Health and safety matters

Despite the pandemic, we are still carrying out essential health and safety work, including gas and electricity safety checks, and checks for Legionella in water.

Our fire risk assessments have all been completed, and we will carry out any necessary follow up works.

If there are any health and safety issues you want to let us know about, either in your own home or in your communal areas, please contact us. You can:

- call the office on 020 8524 6987



- email our asset services team at [Repairs@wfha.org.uk](mailto:Repairs@wfha.org.uk), or
- report them to a staff member.

We will record all concerns, and work to reduce or eliminate any risks that are identified.

## Don't forget our Support Hub



WFHA's Support Hub offers housing-related support and information to our own tenants.

Amongst other things, we can help you to:

- apply for benefits, including Universal Credit
- access Discretionary Housing Payments from the Council
- get Council Tax Benefit, and
- sort out any other housing-related problems you might be experiencing.

You can contact the service by emailing [supporthub@wfha.org.uk](mailto:supporthub@wfha.org.uk) or by calling us on 020 8524 6987. Please include your name and contact phone number, and give us a bit of information about the help you need from us.

## Waltham Forest Housing Association

Energy Centre, 31 Church Hill  
Walthamstow, London E17 3RU  
Phone: 020 8524 6987  
(Answerphone when office is closed)

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

 [walthamforesthousingassociation](https://www.facebook.com/walthamforesthousingassociation)

 [@walthamforesth](https://twitter.com/walthamforesth)

### Office opening hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday,  
Friday: 9am to 5pm

Wednesday: 12 noon to 5pm

### Report a repair during office hours

Non-gas repairs, call 020 8524 6987  
or email [repairs@wfha.org.uk](mailto:repairs@wfha.org.uk)

Gas repairs, call Swale Heating on  
01795 503365.

### Report an emergency repair outside office hours

All repairs (including gas  
emergencies), call 020 8524 2822



## Join our Tenant Scrutiny Panel

### Help us improve our services and we'll give you:

- a **tablet** or **smartphone** connected to the internet
- a **£25 voucher** for each meeting you attend, and
- other reasonable **expenses**.

If you are 18 or over, enthusiastic about getting involved and ready to work in a team for the good of all our tenants, we're looking forward to hearing from you!

To apply, call **020 8524 6987** or email us at [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk)



# Dumped rubbish raises service charges

**We are seeing a significant increase in large items being dumped on your estates – by people who live there, as well as people who don't.**

As well as making estates look uncared for, dumped rubbish means a rise in next year's service charges, because we have to pass on our collection costs.

If you have a large item to get rid of, please either:

- call the Waltham Forest Council on 020 8496 3000 to arrange free removal, or

- take them to your nearest recycling centre.

There are more details on these options on the Council's website at: [www.walthamforest.gov.uk](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk)

If you know that someone has dumped items at your scheme, please contact us, so that we can take action.

