



Managing and building homes

COVID-19 – Your Frequently Asked Questions

As you will have heard in the news, with the government easing some restrictions, the responsibility is on businesses to manage risks and adopt their own working practices that ensure the safety of colleagues and customers.

Throughout the pandemic, we have taken a 'safety-first' approach to manage risks to colleagues, customers and the organisation, while also ensuring we can continue to deliver our services to customers.

Find out more [government information and advice](#).

If you contact us, please don't be concerned if we ask you if anyone in your household is currently self-isolating due to COVID-19, if you've been advised to by your GP or the NHS, or you've been diagnosed.

Important information about new COVID-19 advice

It's really important that you stay safe, follow the advice and visit your local council website or www.gov.uk/coronavirus for any updates.

Our services

Will coronavirus impact the services you can deliver?

Unfortunately, some of our services are being affected or delivered differently, but we're taking all reasonable precautions to protect our customers and colleagues.

Will you still be carrying out repairs during the coronavirus outbreak?

We're currently operating our full repairs service and you can report any new repairs by visiting www.mythirteen.co.uk or calling us on 0300 111 1000. You can also save time by reporting your non-urgent repair online by visiting www.mythirteen.co.uk or calling us later in the week when our lines are less busy to avoid a longer wait time.

During busy times, unfortunately our repairs response times might be longer than usual for non-emergency repairs. If any scheduled work on your home is affected, we'll let you know asap.

Our gas safety and electrical safety checks will continue to be carried out in-line with our legal and statutory duties, ensuring we keep our customers safe.

Our trade operatives have been fully trained in the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and will continue to wear face coverings when they enter your home.

To ensure the safety of our colleagues and customers, we'll continue to practice social distancing and we ask that our customers help us by doing the same.

Please help us help you by staying at least two metres away from our trade operatives and, where possible, step into a separate room and open windows while we're in your home. We also request that where possible and unless subject to medical advice, customers wear a mask/face covering.

Please [watch our short video](#), which addresses the safety measures we've put in place and [download our leaflet for more information](#).

I'm due a gas service soon. Will this still go ahead?

Annual gas safety checks are a legal requirement, so our colleagues are completing these jobs where it's safe for the customer, but as always, if you smell gas or think you have a leak, call the gas emergency number 0800 111 999.

I'm due an electrical service soon. Will this still go ahead?

Our electric testing programme (EICR) is also continuing. Our electrical team is working hard to maintain our properties and should you have an electrical emergency, please contact us on 0300 111 1000.

I'm struggling to pay my rent – what help can I get?

We don't want anyone to be at risk of losing their home because of the virus. If you're having difficulties, speak to us as soon as possible, and we can discuss how we can help you.

I'm due to have some investment work done on my property. Will this still go ahead?

We're continuing to carry out investment work in a safe and controlled manner. If you were due to receive planned investment work, we'll be getting in touch with you to discuss this.

Will complaints and anti-social behaviour cases still be investigated?

We're still dealing with complaints and anti-social behaviour enquiries, and in the main, these will be done over the telephone until further notice, so if you need to speak to us, please give us a call on 0300 111 1000.

Will co-ordinators still visit my home?

We'll only visit your home if there is no other way for us to contact you or the circumstances warrant a visit.

One reason for a visit could be if we need to inspect your home or if you want to transfer to a new home. We will conduct any visit in a covid-safe manner.

Preferably we'll aim to speak to you via telephone or contact you via email or text messaging. You can also contact us by calling 0300 111 1000, by email or through our website or Facebook.

Will walkabouts or neighbourhood drop-ins still go ahead?

Any walkabouts and drop-ins remain postponed for now. However, you can still report any issues you have to your co-ordinator by giving them a call on 0300 111 1000, by email or by visiting our website or Facebook.

Will I still be able to visit one of your community buildings?

So we can help reduce the spread of the virus as much as possible, some of our buildings are closed until further notice. Our Touchpoint stores in Stockton and Hull are open for drop-ins and appointments. You can find [details of the store opening times on the website](#).

I live in an extra care, sheltered or specialist scheme; will you still have staff on-site?

Colleagues will still be available on-site across all our schemes for essential duties, such as health and safety checks, issuing and checking pendants, undertaking support planning and testing fire alarms.

We'll continue to contact you daily where appropriate through your intercom or mobile phone, and you will still be able to contact us for help and support the same way. To protect some of our most vulnerable residents, we're continuing to monitor all government advice.

Keep in touch!

We're still here to provide help and support. There are plenty of other ways to get in touch. You can find all the ways to [contact us on the Thirteen website](#). You can also use the [My Thirteen](#) website for customers..

Moving home

Am I still able to apply for a home?

We are still letting our homes, so check out our website for available properties to let. You can also visit www.mythirteen.co.uk or the Tees Valley-wide Compass site.

Can I view a property I've applied for?

Yes, but we're doing things a bit differently to ensure our customers and colleagues are safe. For the foreseeable future, we'll be carrying out unaccompanied viewings, and you can find out more about how this will work as well as the safety measures we've put in place by [watching our short video](#).

Before any unaccompanied viewing, we will ask you if you are showing any symptoms of COVID-19. If you are, then obviously, the viewing can't go ahead at that time.

I'm interested in buying a house through shared ownership or outright sale. Is this still possible?

Yes, the housing market remains open allowing outright and shared ownership buyers to move to a new house. To find out more, contact our sales team by emailing sales@thirteenhomes.co.uk. You can also visit www.thirteenhomes.co.uk or www.thirteengroup.co.uk/page/shared-ownership-developments.

Precautionary measures

What precautions are you asking your staff members to take in terms of personal hygiene when they visit my home?

All our colleagues have been given regular information about the importance of following government advice on personal hygiene to help against the spread of the virus. All colleagues have sanitiser which they use before and after any work.

While our trade operatives are working in our customers' homes, they will continue to wear a face covering and other personal protective equipment to protect our customers and themselves. It's also important that customers continue to practice social distancing and remain at least two metres away from our trade operatives, or in a separate room where possible.

Government advice also recommends good ventilation where trade operatives are working, including opening a window and all internal doors. We also request that where possible and unless subject to medical advice, customers wear a mask/face covering.

If our trade operative doesn't feel they can carry out a repair safely, they may leave your property to seek advice. If this does happen, we will contact you to discuss the next steps.

Please [watch our short video](#), which addresses the safety measures we've put in place and [download our leaflet for more information](#).

What special precautions will you take in your extra care or sheltered schemes where you have older residents?

Following the lifting of many restrictions, we're still continuously reviewing the approach we have in schemes.

To help keep people as safe as possible, we'll continue to space out furniture to allow for social distancing, provide hand sanitiser dispensers around the scheme and keep communal areas well ventilated wherever we can.

In-line with government advice, it is still recommended that people wear face coverings in crowded areas, such as communal areas and lifts, and our staff will continue to wear PPE and face masks to help keep everyone safe.

Paying my rent

Can I still call to pay my rent and for other enquiries?

If you have your Allpay card, you can pay 24/7 via Allpay 0844 557 8321. You can also still call our contact team on 0300 111 1000 to pay your rent or discuss any other matters with us.

While we know that some customers prefer to make telephone payments, you can also pay your rent or update your account details at a time that suits you, all in one place with My Thirteen. All you have to do is visit www.mythirteen.co.uk and call us on 0300 111 1000 to activate your account.

What if I have difficulty paying my rent because my income is reduced due to the impact of the coronavirus?

If you're struggling to pay your rent or other bills, our teams are on hand to give advice and information. Just contact 0300 111 1000 and ask for a phone appointment.

My health

Should I tell Thirteen if anyone in my household has the virus symptoms, is self-isolating or has tested positive for COVID-19?

Yes, we want to ensure we're supporting all efforts to reduce the spread of the virus, so please tell us if you or anyone in your home is self-isolating or diagnosed with COVID-19. This will help us protect everyone as much as possible.

Some of our colleagues may ask you if they can use a contactless thermometer when visiting your property, so please don't be concerned. These are all steps to help keep our colleagues, customers and communities safe.

Please call us as soon as you can so we can assess the situation and give you advice.

If someone in my household is showing symptoms, self-isolating or has tested positive for COVID-19, will you still be able to do an emergency repair to my home?

If a repair is an emergency and can't be postponed, we'll assess it and decide if a team member can safely carry out the work. Measures would include wearing protective equipment, asking the affected person to move to another room, cleaning the affected area before starting work or combining all these measures.

Please don't be alarmed or offended if this is the case, as we're committed to keeping you and our colleagues as safe as possible. We also request that where possible and unless subject to medical advice, customers wear a mask/face covering.

Ultimately, we need to balance carrying out the repair and keep you and our team safe, and we'll do all we can to help, for example we might leaving temporary heaters if your boiler isn't working and we are unable to safely fix it.

We will look at each case and let you know the best course of action based on the circumstances.

Please [watch our short video](#), which addresses the safety measures we've put in place and [download our leaflet for more information](#).

I've developed the symptoms or have had the virus confirmed, and one of your employees was in contact with me recently.

We're sorry to hear this, and we wish you a speedy recovery. Are you aware of what you need to do to self-isolate, and do you know where to get further advice? Please

let us know about this and provide information on when and where this was, and we can follow it up internally.

I want to move – a neighbour is self-isolating, and I am worried. They aren't self-isolating and are outside, what will you do?

Government advice recommends that everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious. So, if you're concerned, we recommend that you limit close contact. Also, remember that handwashing for 20 seconds, using soap and hot water and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth will also help protect you.

We appreciate it might be concerning but moving you might not be helpful at this stage and could put you and others at higher risk, so we recommend following government advice. If you are still worried, please call us on 0300 111 1000.

I'm self-isolating – will you help bring things to my home?

We're supporting customers in our supported housing schemes by continuing to offer the service they already receive. Unfortunately, we're not in a position to help all customers at the moment, even though we'd like to.

Can you call upon friends and family? Or arrange for an online supermarket delivery who can leave things on your doorstep? If you're on your own – with no support – please call us on 0300 111 1000, and we'll see how we can help.