

Business Continuity Plan - Coronavirus Position Statement

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1 Background

1. This document has been produced in response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic now affecting the UK and elsewhere. Whilst the Group's existing business continuity arrangements envisaged risks such as cyber disruption, fire, flood, loss of staff, etc., our plans - like those of many businesses - could not anticipate the unprecedented impact of this emerging pandemic.
2. This position statement describes what actions the Group is taking to respond to Covid-19 and will be updated as necessary, recognising that the current environment is a fast changing one.
3. In producing this position statement, we are taking account of advice from central Government, the NHS and Public Health England as to how best we can protect our workforce and our residents. We are monitoring this advice constantly.
4. This document may be shared with stakeholders.

2 Aim

5. We recognise that our services will be impacted severely by Covid-19. Our ultimate priorities are to provide services to the most vulnerable of our residents and other service users whilst maintaining business critical functions and protecting the health and well-being of our workforce.

3 Status Update at 25 March 2020

6. On 23 March 2020, the Government announced a lockdown with travel to and from work **only if absolutely necessary** because of the coronavirus. The Prime Minister said that this would last for three weeks.
7. Therefore, none of our offices will be open with effect from Tuesday 24 March 2020.
8. All employees have been asked to stay at home unless they:
 - are site-based and work in independent living, supported schemes or extra care schemes;
 - carry out fire safety checks in general needs properties;
 - carry out emergency repairs (this includes Miles Platting); or
 - they work at Tameside Housing Advice, which is a statutory service we provide.
9. All gas servicing has been halted for the next three weeks and no void works will be carried out and no letting of properties.
10. We will keep these arrangements under constant review.

3.1. Business Critical Functions

11. Critical tasks that need to carry on and which we will endeavour to provide via employees working from home or in essential front line services are:
 - Maintaining staffing and services to our supported housing schemes
 - Services to older residents in our independent living schemes, or living alone in the community
 - Money advice to tenants struggling to pay rent and other bills
 - Payroll
 - People team to ensure employees are deployed to the necessary areas
 - Payment of suppliers
 - Emergency repairs
 - BACS payments
 - FM (for access for IT team, etc. if offices closed)
 - Contractual obligations
 - Delivery of our development programme, including letting of hand overs
 - Rent collection - without which we cannot pay for any of the above

3.2. Repairs

12. We made contingency arrangements for a scenario in which, as a result of mass self isolation by tenants, widespread infection, employee absence due to sickness or self isolation or lockdown, we are unable to deliver our normal day to day repairs service and we moved to an 'emergencies plus' repairs service with effect from 24 March 2020.
13. All emergency and safety critical repairs will be completed. Where these are required in properties with people who have symptoms and are self-isolating, we are providing additional safety precautions to protect our employees who attend.
14. Our call centre staff are being equipped to work from home and receive calls from residents making inbound calls.
15. Our emergency repairs criteria are:
 - Complete failure of gas central heating and hot water
 - Electrical failure to property (none appliance related)
 - Plumbing leaks that cannot be controlled or isolated
 - Blocked toilets where sewage is overflowing into the property

- Insecure entrance doors
- Responding to flooded properties
- Responding to property fires
- Suspected gas leaks
- CO alarm activations
- Faulty smoke alarms
- Dangerous electrics as a result of water ingress
- Broken and insecure windows
- Dangerous structures
- Failure of warden call system
- Loss of communal/emergency lighting
- Statutory testing around emergency lighting, fire alarms and water hygiene

3.3. Rent Collection

16. Tenants who get into rent arrears for reasons connected with Covid-19 will be treated sensitively and assisted. The organisation continues to offer free and confidential advice through its money advice teams and may be able to assist tenants in ensuring they are claiming the benefits and financial assistance they are entitled to.

3.4. Impact on Workforce

17. In line with Government projections, we are planning for up to 80% of the workforce becoming infected by Covid-19 with up to 50% being off at any one time. Whilst for many the symptoms will be mild and the workforce will not all be infected at the same time, we have carried out a risk assessment of all our employees and have identified approximately 300 people who have a pre-existing condition, or whose family or caring network includes such persons. Approximately 220 of these have taken the opportunity to self isolate to protect themselves from Covid-19 and we have equipped or are in the process of equipping as many of these to work from home as we can.

3.5. Homeworking

18. We have identified all the other employees in business critical roles who might perform their job roles at home and have largely equipped these with the IT to do so. We will issue IT equipment to the remaining priority employees over the remainder of week commencing 23 March 2020, enabling the vast majority of normally office-based employees to work from home as far as possible.

19. Not all staff require full system access and we are taking account of this in our assumptions.
20. We have reviewed and updated our homeworking policy to take account of the coronavirus and published this to employees.

3.6. Supported Housing Schemes

21. Many of our supported housing schemes have on-site staff providing a 24 hour service. Wherever possible we are continuing to run these services, albeit on some occasions with reduced staffing levels. We will utilise teams from across all services to maintain as many supported housing services as possible both 24 hour and visiting support.
22. Business Continuity plans for our staffed schemes and maintenance services are being reviewed and brought into effect as needed.

3.7. Independent Living and Supported Housing Schemes

23. We carried out a business-wide review of all our ILS and supported schemes to ensure that cleaning regimes have been increased in line with government guidelines. We have provided advice to residents on how to protect themselves through proper hygiene. We have liaised with the care teams who work in our buildings but are commissioned by the local authorities to ensure they will continue to provide care to our residents.
24. In light of the lockdown we have closed communal lounges, taped off communal areas that cannot be secured and closed lavatories that are normally accessible to all residents and visitors.
25. We have also asked residents not to invite external visitors into their schemes, although this is not something we can enforce as we have no legal powers to do so and our schemes are not staffed 24/7.

3.8. Communications

26. Communications with tenants are being channelled through all media, including writing out to all our tenants. Updates are provided on our website, with regular emails sent to notify residents of important information.
27. Six sets of FAQs for employees have been distributed via email and fresh FAQs are developed and issued in response to the changing situation and any further issues raised by staff. We are also using our Facebook page, Team - Jigsaw, to communicate with employees and will have the capability shortly to mass text employees.
28. Tailored messages are also being issued to managers.

3.9. Warning Flags

29. We have set up warning flags on our IT systems to highlight where tenants or their household members are self isolating because of actual or suspected infection or as a precaution. We have put in place protocols to ensure that this information is shared with employees and contractors as necessary to minimise the possibility of exposure to risk.

3.10. Offices

30. We have cancelled all non critical business meetings and closed our hubs and our main offices. We have agreed with local authority commissioners to move some services to a telephone only service and so minimise face-to-face contact.

3.11. Training to Staff

31. All staff have been enrolled in an online infection training module with a completion date of 27 March 2020 (to capture staff who may have been on leave when it was launched).

3.12. Assurance

32. We reported to our Risk and Audit Committee on 16 March 2020 and are giving verbal updates to our landlord and Jigsaw Support boards during the same reporting cycle.
33. Risk & Audit Committee are being updated weekly on the position, or more frequently if the situation merits it.

3.13. Business Continuity

34. The Group's response to Covid-19 is being managed by the Business Continuity Group, which comprises directors from a range of disciplines and includes the Group Chief Executive and all members of EMT. This group is meeting daily.

3.14. Stakeholders

35. We will share this position statement with stakeholders via our website and provide updates as and when we are in a position to do so.



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