

Managing the impact of coronavirus on our business and customers



27 March 2020

Planning for the unexpected is part of our business

Futures Housing Group is driven by its social purpose. While much of our work is focused on the practicalities of providing homes, behind that our fundamental concern is the welfare of our customers.

People depend on us, not just for putting a roof over their heads, but also a range of services to help them live independently and live well. Anything that disrupts our work could have a negative impact on our customers. So planning to keep things running smoothly through unexpected events and to minimise the effect on customers is an essential part of our work

We have a range of systems and procedures in place in anticipation of having to deal with emergencies or other disruptions. These include contingency plans for all aspects of our work. These plans are regularly reviewed and senior managers are responsible, both individually and as a group, for ensuring that we are prepared to keep problems under control.

Risk management is the responsibility of everyone at Futures Housing Group and is overseen by our Executive Team and Group Board.

As a responsible organisation, we also take the well-being of our staff and those we work with very seriously and our contingency plans reflect this.

Managing our response to the coronavirus outbreak

Planning for pandemics or other health-related incidents has been part of our overall business continuity planning for a number of years. As a result, we already had core plans in place for maintaining our services to customers and the effective running of our business when it became apparent that the UK was at the start of a coronavirus outbreak.

We triggered the first stage of our business continuity plans early in March as infections began to be reported across the UK. Senior managers from across the organisation, supported by a range of staff involved in providing crucial services, continue to meet regularly to review the situation, monitor developments and lead our response. We are following all relevant official government and NHS advice. All our operational plans are being reviewed and updated as necessary.

We have invested heavily in recent years in technology. This means that most staff have access to equipment and systems that allow them to work flexibly from any online location. We are therefore well equipped to maintain service delivery.

We continue to monitor advice from the government and are mindful of the fact that the number of people affected may increase significantly, as it has in other countries, and this could start to disrupt our own organisation, the lives of our customers, and the operations of

our key supply partners. In the event of this, we are prepared to respond quickly and effectively.

Our business continuity strategy for coronavirus

Our response to the growing impact on our business and customers from coronavirus infections focuses on the following areas:

- Minimising risk – to our customers, our workforce, our operational partners and the wider community. This means taking sensible steps, based on national guidance, to help reduce the risk of spreading the infection in the course of our work.
- Using our flexible working capacity so that people can work remotely if they are unable to travel to their normal workplace.
- Supporting our workforce to help minimise the impact of coronavirus on them and their families.
- Working effectively with key suppliers and partners to ensure that our plans are co-ordinated and jointly helping to keep key services running.
- Prioritising essential systems and services if demand increases and/or significant numbers of our people cannot work due to being unwell. This will mean, for example:
 - Cutting back on non-urgent services to free up teams to deal with emergencies.
 - Temporarily redeploying staff who are fit to work into other roles, where possible, to support critical business functions.
 - Focusing on the needs of customers who we know are more vulnerable.
- Staying alert and adaptable to changes in the outbreak and providing clear and effective leadership at all stages.
- Considering long-term as well as short-term implications of the outbreak to ensure that we can resume normal operations quickly and effectively once the crisis period passes.

Our current status (27 March 2020)

Following the announcement by the government on 23 March of further controls to limit the spread of coronavirus, we have made further changes to how we work. These are designed to help us comply with government measures and to help reduce the risk of infection for both our customers and staff.

As of 27 March:

- All staff have been instructed to stay at home. Many of them can work from home as normal. Where this is more difficult, people are on standby to carry out other types of work, as appropriate, to help keep the business running as smoothly as possible.
- Staff carrying out essential and emergency work are receiving more detailed and specific instructions through line managers and team leaders. Our aim is to continue dealing with serious and potentially harmful incidents in the homes we provide, while at the same time trying to further reduce the spread of the virus and keep customers and staff safe.
- Customers have been informed that we can only now respond to urgent repairs in person. A list of problems that fall into this category has been published on our website. We will attempt to provide remote support where possible (for example trying to help customers resolve problems themselves where it is possible and safe

for them to do so). In the case of heating or hot water failure, we may leave secondary heating equipment with the customer to help them rather than trying to carry out significant repairs for the time being.

- Our main offices are now closed (except for vital work such as maintenance of centralised IT services).
- In line with government advice, we have also suspended any new moves into properties we own or provide, except for isolated circumstances where, for example, it would result in someone becoming homeless if we did not proceed.

We recognise that these measures will create uncertainty and inconvenience for many people. However, we need to play our part in national efforts to help limit the spread of coronavirus. We will continue to respond and adapt as the situation changes.

Looking to the future

This continues to be a very challenging and fast-moving situation for the whole nation. So far our business continuity plans are proving to be robust. We are continuing to adapt and in most cases things are running well and according to our plans. While we regret having to reduce services to customers, we know that they will understand the need for us to take these steps.

Our business continuity teams continue to meet and lead our response to this crisis. We are confident that we will be in a strong position to return to business as normal once the situation stabilises and the risks posed by the virus are reduced.

We will of course review our actions and the impact they had when this outbreak comes to an end and use the lessons we learn to further improve our planning for any future incidents.