

# Cold weather update: 8 ways landlords can support older tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic

With colder weather and an ongoing '2<sup>nd</sup> wave' of COVID-19, Age UK London is concerned that some older tenants do not have the support they need during this difficult time.

**Good landlords should be looking out for their older tenants.**

We know that landlords care about the mental and physical health of their vulnerable tenants. This winter will see new restrictions that ask us to spend more time at home. **We are asking all good London landlords to:**

## 1. Contact your older tenants

*Think about any older tenants you may have and contact them by phone, text or email to check if they are ok. Even if you contacted your tenant during the March – May lockdown please contact them again. We can all make assumptions about who may or may not need support but circumstances change. An older tenant may have a long-term health condition that you are unaware of. With colder months upon us and new COVID-19 restrictions it is important to be aware that some tenants may be susceptible to the flu or other respiratory illness.*

**Please note:** Many older tenants feel anxious about potential scams and in some cases may be vulnerable to doorstep scam callers. Please only visit a tenant at their home with prior arrangement for a visit at an agreed time and in accordance with [current government guidance](#).

## 2. Check your heating systems

*Older tenants can be more vulnerable to respiratory illness. This can lead to hospitalisations, exacerbate conditions such as arthritis and can contribute to the development of more severe COVID-19 symptoms. With colder weather on the way please ask tenants if all rooms in the home are sufficiently heated. It is vital that any cases of damp are addressed and that heating systems in all rooms are in good working order. Please take immediate action to resolve any problems identified.<sup>1</sup>*

## 3. Give your tenant details of their local Age UK

Details of local Age UKs can be found here: <https://bit.ly/LocalAgeUKsInLondon>. Most local Age UKs have an Information and Advice Line for older people.

## 4. Put your tenant in touch with a local buddy

*During this stage of the pandemic not all tenants will have a local support network to help with food shopping, collecting prescriptions and other tasks. If you have another tenant*

<sup>1</sup> Landlords can take steps to carry out repairs and safety inspections throughout the country under new national restrictions, which begin in England from 5 November provided these are undertaken in line with public health advice and the relevant coronavirus (COVID-19) legislation. ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-landlords-and-tenants> )

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*that lives locally ask if they could 'buddy-up' with a tenant in need of support. Your tenant may be new to the area and research has found that people are less likely to know their neighbours in areas with a large number of privately rented properties. Any support must be done in a way that keeps everyone safe. For more information about volunteering safely please visit: <https://bit.ly/NeighbourlyVolunteering>*

### 5. Ask your tenant about any serious repairs and maintenance and make a safe and practical plan for the work to be undertaken<sup>2</sup>

*Even if it is not possible to undertake some work during any full lockdown please keep your tenant informed about plans. The knowledge that repairs or maintenance will still be done will be reassuring for tenants.*

### 6. Make a fair and practical rent payment plan

*One in three older tenants lives in poverty after the rent is paid. For someone just scraping by on a pension or an older worker that has lost their job as a result of the pandemic small changes like a change to the rent due date or a small discount for an agreed number of months can make a huge difference.*

### 7. Share details of your tenant's community support hub

*All Local Authorities have an online community support hub. Local hubs give contact details where people can register for support. Find your local hub here: <https://bit.ly/Covid19CommunityHubs>*

### 8. Remind yourself of government guidance for landlords and tenants and share this with your tenants

*The government have published updated guidance for landlords and tenants based on the Coronavirus Act 2020. Please remind yourself of the guidance and let your tenant know that you will be following the guidance (remember that guidance may have been updated since you last read it). <https://bit.ly/Covid19GuidanceForLandlords>*

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