



## COVID-19: changes to how we're letting our homes

The government has amended the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) restrictions](#) to make clear that people who wish to move home can do so. This guidance provides important public health information to ensure that moving home and key activities around this, such as viewing property, can happen safely.

SHAL will ask that all parties involved in a house move are able to be as flexible as possible and be prepared to delay moving, for example if someone becomes ill with coronavirus during the moving process or has to self-isolate. It may also become necessary to pause all home moves for a short period of time to manage the spread of the coronavirus. We will keep this under review in line with the Government advice.

In line with government's advice, those who are shielding or otherwise clinically vulnerable should ensure they are aware of medical advice, including on staying at home and avoiding unnecessary contact with people from other households. SHAL will ask everyone in these categories to make clear their circumstances, to enable us to implement additional precautionary measures to protect both themselves and SHAL employees.

SHAL will be unable to offer property viewings or moving in to a SHAL home to anyone who is self-isolating or has tested positive for Coronavirus. We will work with the applicant and verify their personal circumstances, and any viewing or appointment will be completed at the end of the self-isolation period.

Should a move be essential for people in this category, for instance due to an urgent health and safety risk, SHAL will contact Public Health England for advice.

**This additional information has been put together to ensure we comply with the latest government guidelines and will be reviewed as and when required and explains how we're working differently at the moment.**

## Exchanges

We will start accepting applications to exchange tenancies after 1 September. We'd have to make significant changes to how we work and you can [find out more here](#).

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2 King Square, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 3DG

Online: [www.shal.org](http://www.shal.org) – Email: [information@shal.org](mailto:information@shal.org) – Tel: 01278 444344

SHAL is registered in England and Wales as a Community Benefit Society and an exempt charity (number 27772R).

## Moving out

### Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy you still need to give at least 4 weeks' notice in writing. If you contact us by phone or email we'll send out a form for you to complete and return.

You're still required to pay all rent due to the end of the notice period and you're also still responsible for ensuring the property is returned ready to be re-let as soon as possible.

### Property inspection

Once we receive your signed Notice to Quit (NTQ), we will contact you to arrange your end of tenancy inspection. We will complete a risk assessment when we arrange the appointment and again when we arrive at your home.

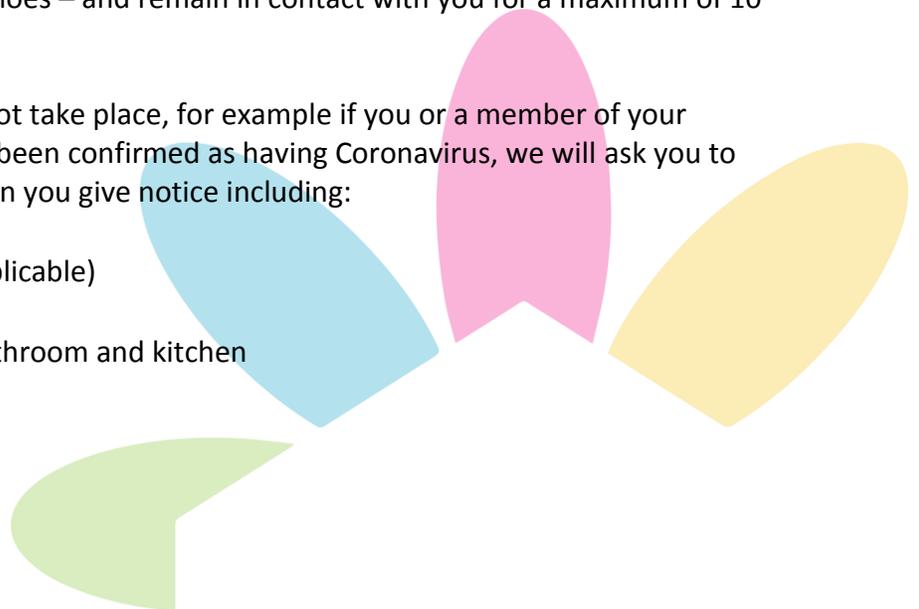
You will be asked to arrange your home so that the risk of infection is reduced. This includes:

- opening windows in the room where our employee or contractor will be working
- opening all doors so that our employee or contractor does not need to touch the handles
- arranging furniture so that physical distancing can be maintained
- opening the front door and then withdrawing into the home and keeping to physical distancing guidelines
- not entering the room whilst work is being carried out
- not offering refreshments or making refreshments for yourself if this means that you must enter the room where the SHAL employee or contractor is working

Where social distancing cannot reasonably be maintained SHAL employees and contractors will use PPE – masks, gloves and cover shoes – and remain in contact with you for a maximum of 10 minutes.

If an end of tenancy inspection cannot take place, for example if you or a member of your household are self-isolating or have been confirmed as having Coronavirus, we will ask you to email us photos of the property when you give notice including:

- Front and back garden (if applicable)
- Front and back door
- Each room, especially the bathroom and kitchen
- Specific repairs you identify



Alternatively, we may be able to video call you and inspect the property with you virtually without putting yourself at risk. We appreciate not everyone will be able to do this but the more information we have the better we're able to clarify what you may need to do to avoid being re-charged after you leave. Some re-charges may be identified only when we inspect the property after you've moved out.

## Clearing the property

When you leave the property, you need to make every effort to make sure it's clean and clear and ready for the next tenant to move in to avoid being re-charged.

However, we appreciate the temporary restricted access of recycling and household waste centres makes this difficult. Please speak to us if for any reason you're not able to clear the property fully.

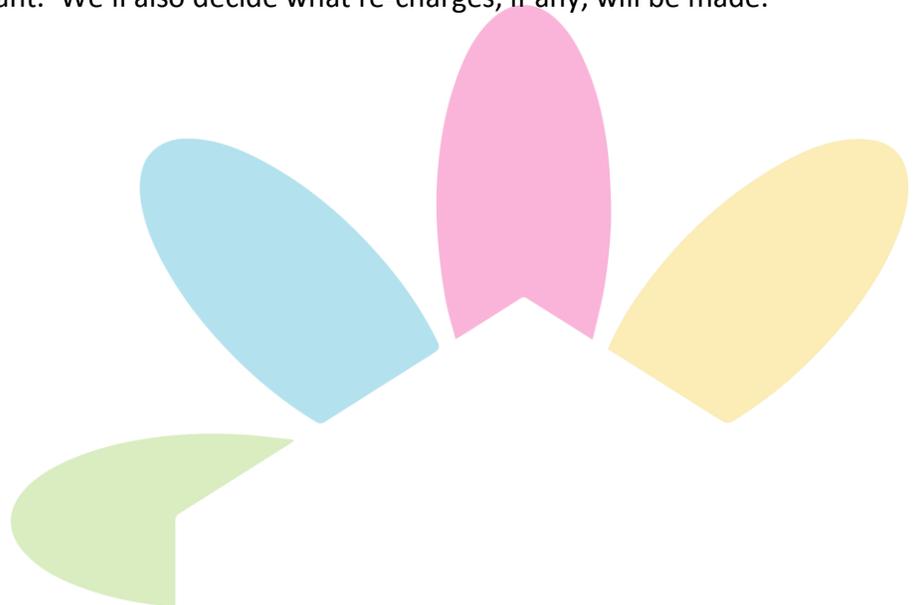
If you're not able to dispose of recycling and household waste we may ask you to sort it out and bag it up so it can be taken away after you've moved out.

## Returning your keys

You still need to return a set of keys for the property by the end of your tenancy. You can either return them in the post or post them through the door at SHAL's office. You'll need to either email or text your Housing Officer to confirm you've done so. You may be re-charged if you don't return them at the end of your tenancy.

## After you've moved out

We'll inspect the property after you've moved out. This will take place no earlier than 3 days after you've moved out. We'll also take photos of the property and decide what work we need to do to get it ready for the next tenant. We'll also decide what re-charges, if any, will be made.



## What could I be charged for?

We will confirm what we expect you to do before you move out. We will charge you if we need to make repairs that are your responsibility (including items that may have been damaged while you've been living there) or clean and clear the property. Charges could include:

- Gaining access to the property if you don't return the keys in time
- Clearing the property of personal belongings/appliances
- Clearing the garden(s) and cutting the grass
- Cleaning the property, including removing mould
- Repairing/replacing damaged items
- Settling debts on utility meters and ordering replacement cards/keys
- Re-decorating the property if it's not been decorated to an acceptable standard

Please speak to your Housing Officer if you have any questions or concerns about ending your tenancy.



## Moving in

### Getting your new home ready

We'll continue to do everything we need to get things right and make all the repairs and improvements required in your new home.

### Application

Your application will be discussed over the phone and by email. We'll send you a file copy of the tenancy agreement and give you time to read it. We'll contact you, either by phone or video call, to make sure you're happy you understand the terms and conditions.

### Viewing your new home

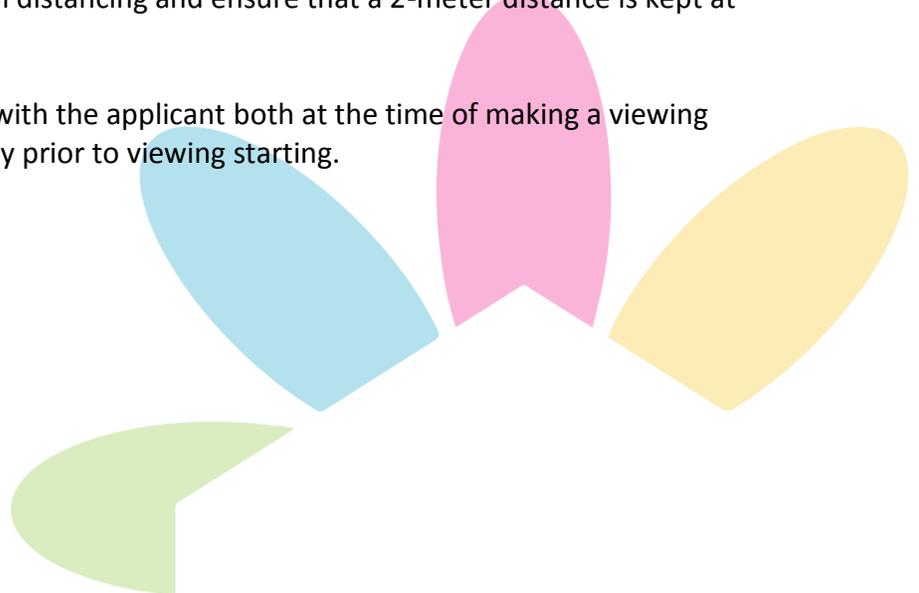
We'll record a 'virtual tour' so you can view your home without putting yourself at risk.

If a physical viewing is required, for example if we are unable to offer a 'virtual viewing', this will be limited to the applicant only. If the applicant or any member of their household is showing symptoms of coronavirus or is self-isolating, then a physical viewing will be delayed.

When physically viewing properties, where possible, you should avoid touching surfaces, wash your hands regularly, and bring your own hand sanitiser. The number of people on a viewing should be minimised to those that absolutely have to be there. If you need to be accompanied by small children, you should try to keep them from touching surfaces and ensure they wash their hands regularly.

During a physical viewing, the SHAL employee will wait outside the property whilst the applicant walks around. We will answer any questions afterwards. It is important to follow Government guidelines around social distancing and ensure that a 2-meter distance is kept at all times.

We will complete a risk assessment with the applicant both at the time of making a viewing appointment and also at the property prior to viewing starting.



## Signing your tenancy agreement

We'll make this process as digital as possible to minimise the risk of transmission. We'll send you a final copy of the tenancy agreement for you to sign and return to us. Once the property is ready and you've paid at least one week's rent we'll sign the agreement and give you the code to the key safe at the property.

If we need to meet you to sign the agreement, we will carry out a risk assessment to agree how we can do so safely and:

- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and use hand sanitiser
- Meet with those named on the tenancy agreement only
- Meet for a maximum of 15 minutes

## Further information

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

[Guidance for landlords and tenants](#)

[Guidance for social landlords on essential moves](#)

[Home moving](#)

[Staying at home and away from others](#)

*Last up-date: Monday 2 November 2020.*

