



BLENHEIM GARDENS RESIDENT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION LIMITED

May 2020

Dear Resident(s)

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and our service delivery update

We would like to reassure all our residents that along with our contractors, the RMO are working hard to continue to provide services and support you all as much as we can through this difficult period.

This letter is to provide an update on our services during this period.

RMO office

The RMO office remains closed. However, we will continue to provide a telephone service on 020 7926 0158 or by email to Blenheimgardens@lambeth.gov.uk.

The RMO operates an emergency helpline on **07903 824 072**

The RMO team can offer visual meetings via Microsoft Team. If you would like to book a meeting with a member of the team, please get in touch.

Following Government guidance issued on 11th May, the RMO is working on changes to make the estate office and our working practices 'Covid-19 secure'. We are working on what this means to our operational practices and we will be providing a further update shortly.

RMO board

The RMO board remains fully functional and are providing daily support to the RMO team. The board receive routine updates on operational matters and approve decision as and when they need to be taken.

Meetings

All meetings at the RMO office and with RMO officers have been cancelled until further notice.

Mission Statement: "Building a greener, safer and a more prosperous future with the community we serve"

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Repairs and maintenance

Currently our main priority is the wellbeing and safety of our residents, team members and contractors. The responsive repairs service is running as usual but with extra precautions in place. If you have symptoms of corona virus then you will need to tell us this when reporting repairs. The RMO continue to undertake the following emergency repairs;

- Uncontainable leaks that are leading to flooding
- Boarding a property following a crime
- Blocked W.C when this is the only toilet in the property
- Total loss of electrics
- Back surging drains leading to flooding and blockages
- Urgent communal repairs i.e. dangerous structures
- Total Loss of heating
- Total failure of lighting in stairwells and corridors
- Gas leaks. i.e. from gas networks, gas leaks within properties.
- Carbon monoxide alarms

All other non-urgent repairs reported to us will be completed when it is safe to do so.

Our programme of gas servicing will continue as planned in line with industry advice. If your gas service is due, then you will be made aware of the increased safety measures and how this will be carried out.

From 4 pm, please contact TW Drainage on Freephone **0800 121 6122** for any emergency repair listed above only. TW drainage continue to operate a 24/7 service.

For any boiler related repairs, please continue to report directly to Smith and Byford on **0800 091 2140**. Smith and Byford continue to operate a 24/7 service.

Social distancing rules must be maintained whilst the operative is working in your home.

If you are a homeowner and wish to access our emergency repairs service during this period, please contact us.

Lettings

Due to the latest Government recommendations, we will not be letting properties and or progressing mutual exchange applications. Once this guidance changes, we will contact all residents who are wanting to move in to one of our properties or have applied for an exchange.

Estate Parking

We have noticed that some cars are obstructing bin areas, garages, pathways with double yellow lines and parking in disabled bays when the vehicle owner or driver is not disabled.

Due to this, we have decided to bring back partial parking enforcement to ensure that all residents are parking in designated parking areas and according to the regulations.

We lifted restrictions to help residents who are self-isolating in their homes during this time and due to the office being closed.

A **full parking service** will be re-introduced on **Monday 15th June 2020**. If you require a new parking permit, please make arrangements to submit your vehicle details (insurance and log book) to the RMO office, either by leaving in the post box outside the main office or by email to blenheimgardens@lambeth.gov.uk before the 15th June.

All hard copy documents received will be returned to you along with your new permit.

You can pay for your permit using the following payment methods:

- Cash
- Cheques – please make cheques payable to Blenheim Gardens RMO
- BACs

Payment to: Blenheim Gardens RMO

Bank: Lloyds

Sort code: 30-96-07

Account Number: 02278867

Please use your address as the payment reference number.

On **Monday 6th July 2020**, the RMO will reintroduce **24/7 parking enforcement** throughout the estate. This decision was taken by the RMO board and ratified at a general meeting hosted on 17th March. One reason for this change is due to several 'parking free' building projects being erected surrounding the estate including a 600-student college in Lyham Road (just off Prague Place), a school extension off Glanville Road and permission for a 5-unit development in Ramilles Close.

Energy supplies

Gas and electricity key meters - if you are unable to get to the shops to top-up your card contact your supplier and explain, and they should issue a temporary credit on your account.

Vulnerable residents

The RMO continues to undertake welfare calls to our vulnerable residents. If you have concerns regarding a neighbour or friend, do let us know,

Checking-in service

The RMO is now contacting all residents to check on them to ensure they are okay and if they require any support and advice from us. We are also using this opportunity to also update our resident profile information. If you receive a resident's profile form from us this means we may not have the correct information for you and or people living in your household.

Please complete and return the form to us. Collection can be arranged on request.

Self-isolation

If you need support yourself or are worried about a neighbour, please let us know. Mental health support, safeguarding vulnerable adults and children and supporting people at risk of domestic or sexual abuse is our top priority.

Volunteering program

The RMO has introduced an estate welfare volunteer program to support residents who are vulnerable or who are self-isolating.

If you need support, or wish to volunteer your services, please get in touch.

Social media updates

The RMO will continue to update our Facebook page and website www.bgrmo.org.uk
Please add us on Facebook at 'Blenheim Gardens RMO' for the latest information.

Food projects

The RMO continues to support several local food projects and these are distributed from the Community Hub. If you wish to be included on our food email distribution list, please get in touch. The RMO also provide foodbank vouchers. If you require a voucher, please contact us.

If you wish to donate food to our food projects, please get in touch.

Educational support

The RMO has contacted residents with children and provided access to several free websites to support home learning. We have also provided educational packs by school key stages on request. To obtain an education pack for your child, please get in touch.

Rent, Council Tax and Service Charge payments

Rent, Council Tax and service charge payments remain payable.

Please contact the RMO on 020 7926 0158 to make payment or use the debit and credit card hotline on 020 8290 2086 which is available 24/7 or on line <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/make-a-payment>

Pram shed invoices

The RMO has issued pram shed invoices for the year. The payment details are on the invoice provided. Please ensure you pay for your pram shed as soon as possible.

Sharp decline in earnings

With 20% of workers nationally losing their income, we anticipate that that financial hardship will be a big issue for some RMO residents.

We know that some residents are waiting for government help in the form of Universal Credit, the furloughed workers and self-employed schemes. If you are waiting for help from the furloughed workers and self-employed schemes, the money may not be available for a couple of months. Our strong advice is to register for Universal Credit and apply for back-dating of up to a month if your income collapsed before you made your claim <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

Benefits help and advice for all

If you have a change of circumstances, employment and or finances during this period, help and advice is available:

Lambeth housing benefit / council tax - 0345 302 2312.

Universal Credit - 08003285644

DWP - 08007317898 or 08007310469

Centre 70 - enquiries@centre70.org.uk or 020 8670 0070

Citizens Advice - www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us/
Or Adviceline: 03444 111 444

Brixton Advice Centre - Brixton Advice Centre 167 Railton Road Brixton London SE24 0LU

Shelter - <https://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Thames water overcharges

The RMO is supporting Council residents who have been overcharged water rates by the local authority to make a reclaim. This is a lengthy process and we require your patience. Please do not keep contacting the RMO for an update, since once we have undertaken our part of the process, the refund is for Lambeth Council to process. The process can take between 6-8 weeks.

A credit balance will only be released by the Council after they have completed all their checks. Once a credit has been applied to your rent account, we will let you know. You will then be able to claim the credit on your rent account. You will need to ensure your rent account does not go into arrears when withdrawing the balance. You are always required to keep a credit balance since rent is payable in advance.

At the end of April, we had received notification from the Council to **STOP** processing water refunds since the Court has granted them leave to appeal the decision that tenants have been overcharged for water. We will update you as and when the position is clarified.

Estate cleaning and caretaking

The estate cleaning service is not affected at this time and will continue. We are continuing to disinfect the estate weekly.

We ask that all resident help the cleaning service by:

- Disposing of your waste in the correct manner and not dumping on the estate
- Using the facilities provided for disposing of refuse, recycling and or bulk items
- Having consideration for the caretakers and your neighbours
- Reporting incidents to the RMO on 020 7926 0158

Refuse, Recycling and bulk collections

The refuse, recycling and bulk collections are not affected at this time and will continue.

Estate Garden Maintenance

The Green team continue to maintain the estate greenery during the pandemic period. They have also just completed the estate weeding.

Garden waste

If you are intending to undertake works to your private gardens during the lock down period, **PLEASE** make sure you have made your own arrangements to dispose of any green waste. Green waste is not collected by the RMO or the Council. Dumping on the estate is fly tipping. Fly tipping is a criminal offence.

Planned works

The RMO is still undertaking planned works where it is safe to do so. Such works include:

- Painting of pram shed doors
- Painting communal estate areas – barriers etc
- Jetting to blocks, garages and bin chambers
- Working with the council to install a door entry system to the estate blocks
- Working with the Council to rectify the defunct Lambeth Housing Standards work
- Working with the Council to install additional CCTV
- Undertaking our own CCTV feasibility project
- Reservicing empty properties ready for re-let

The estate lighting project has now been completed, and we urge you to return your estate light lighting satisfaction survey if you have not done so already. Your feedback is important to us.

Social distancing

Social distancing rules must always be maintained whilst on the estate. It is for your own safety.

RMOs continuation ballot

Every 5 years, the RMO is obligated to undertake a continuation ballot. This ballot will confirm if you wish for the RMO to continue to manage your housing management services or for these to be returned to Lambeth Council.

The continuation ballot is proceeding as planned although there may be some changes to the process. We will agree any changes with the council and our independent advisors, Open Communities.

Ballot papers will be dispatched shortly. Please complete your ballot paper and return to the RMO office, remembering to vote '**Yes**' to retain your RMO, your local office and your services!

Smoke alarms

During this period when more residents are staying at home, it is important that you regularly check that your smoke alarms are working. Smoke alarms save lives.

If your smoke alarm is bleeping, it may mean that the battery needs replacing. Generally smoke alarms take a V9 battery. If you require a battery, you can purchase one from the RMO.

If after you have exchanged the battery, the smoke alarm remains bleeping, you may need to replace the alarm. Please contact us for further advice on this. Your safety is paramount.

ASB and noise nuisance

During the lockdown period, we have had an increase in reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) including noise nuisance. We appreciate these are unprecedented times, but we ask that you always continue to have respect for your neighbours and others living or visiting the estate during this difficult period.

The council will be installing additional cameras on the estate very soon to be monitored 24/7. These cameras will be in addition to the cameras due to be installed by the RMO. If you are experiencing any form of ASB, please get in touch with us.

Crime

We are aware that non-residents are again using the block stairwells to congregate. Please do not accept or tolerate this. Please report to the Police.

Please be reminded that you can continue to report crime online to the Police at <https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/how-to-report-a-crime/>

In an emergency always dial 999.

You can also report in confidence to Crimestoppers at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/> or by telephone to 0800 555 111

The safer neighbourhood police team continue to patrol the estate.

The lockdown period has provided an opportunity for some criminals to take advantage of people. Reports of fraud and scams are on the increase. Please be on your guard.

Domestic and sexual abuse

Sadly, domestic and sexual abuse cases are on the increase nationally.

If you are worried for your own safety or a neighbour's, please contact Solace on 020 7593 1290. No one should ever have to suffer from domestic or sexual abuse and help is always available for those who need it. You can also contact the Gaia Centre on 0207 733 8724 or email lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk

Lambeth Council

Lambeth Council have launched our helpline for vulnerable people to contact the council as part of our Community Hub. The helpline number is 020 7926 2999.

There is a new web page dedicated to the Council's coronavirus-related content:
<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

Government guidance

The Government is asking everyone to do all they can to help stop coronavirus spreading and has published advice on maintaining strict separation from others wherever possible during this unprecedented time. The advice is:

Stay alert

We can all help control the virus if we all stay alert. This means you must:

- stay at home as much as possible
- work from home if you can
- limit contact with other people
- keep your distance if you go out (2 metres apart where possible)
- wash your hands regularly

Self-isolate if you or anyone in your household has symptoms

We also encourage you not to touch surfaces such as handrails where possible

Useful links:

- www.nhs.uk/coronavirus
- www.gov.uk/coronavirus
- www.lambeth.gov.uk/coronavirus
- <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

Thank you and Stay Safe – we are in this together.

Blenheim Gardens RMO