



BLenheim GARDENS RESIDENT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION LIMITED

June 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.

Thank you

Covid-19 represents a severe threat to us as a community as well as the services we provide. It has been very hard and has had serious and, in some cases, tragic consequences.

However, your response has also been extraordinary, and we are extremely proud of how we all have responded to the crisis and been able to support ourselves. We have heard of numerous examples of residents helping each other during this difficult period. Many people have told us about how good it has been to get to know their neighbours, and the new friendships that have arisen. Neighbours with different life experiences who were leading separate lives have started talking to each other. The crisis has brought people together. We really appreciate your efforts -THANK YOU.

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**. **This number is for estate emergencies only such as a fire, it is not a repairs line.**

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

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

24 Prague Place, Blenheim Gardens Estate, London SW2 5ED

Phone: 020 7926 0158 Fax: 020 8678 7021 Email: blenheimgardens@lambeth.gov.uk Web: www.bgrmo.org.uk

Registered as an Industrial & Provident Society Registration Number 29030R; VAT Number: 773 9166 89



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.

We are seeking to re-open the estate office on an **appointment only** basis two periods each week (Monday & Thursday only), between 11 am until 2 pm from Thursday 2nd July 2020. Appointments are restricted to 10 minutes per resident. The opening arrangements are subject to change due to availability of members of the RMO team.

We are aiming to extend our opening times in August and further information on this will be released shortly.

To support you when you visit the estate office, we enclose with this letter guidance on visiting the estate office, which we have developed to keep you and the RMO employees safe during your visit. It is important that the guidance is always maintained.

RMO team

Our apprentice customer services officer, Rosie, left the RMO at the end of May following the successful completion of her apprenticeship. We wish Rosie all the best in the future.

The RMO does welcome Gloria to our team. Gloria is our new customer services apprentice and will be replacing Rosie. We wish Gloria all the best in her new role and welcome her to our team.

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.

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. We have now commenced our 'back log' repairs program to catch up on the many repairs we were unable to do during the lockdown period. If you have an outstanding repair, please get in touch.

The RMO has developed new guidelines for undertaking repairs and the main aspects for residents to consider are:

- Social distance (at least 2 metres) when the operative is working in your home
- Ensure the property is well ventilated by opening doors and windows
- Remember good hygiene including washing surfaces regularly including washing your hands at least 6 times a day

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**. 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

Lambeth's Council's choice-based lettings system was re-introduced on 27th May and applicants are now able to bid for vacant properties.

The RMO is also in the process of undertaking several mutual exchanges throughout the estate. If you are interested in joining the RMO mutual exchange list, please get in touch.

Estate Parking – service change update

A **full parking service** will be re-introduced on **Monday 15th June 2020**. If you require a new - Resident parking permit, please make arrangements to submit your vehicle details (insurance document, MOT (if applicable) 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.

On **Monday 6th July 2020**, the RMO will re-introduce **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.

The cost of permits has increased this year as follows:

A resident's permit is £12.00 (inclusive of VAT)

A visitor's permit is £12.00 (inclusive of VAT)

A motorbike permit is £12.00 (inclusive of VAT)

Tenants of a leaseholder or freeholder will be issued 1 visitor permit per address only for £60.00 per year inclusive of VAT

Resident Freeholders who do not pay no service charge will be charged £36.00 inclusive of VAT. The duration of this permit is 1 year from date of issue.

Non-resident homeowners – will not be issued a parking permit, although they may purchase day permits.

If a permit is lost or destroyed, a fee of £90.00 including VAT is payable for the issue of a replacement permit.

All other visitors' permits after 1, residents will need to purchase day permits at £2.00 per day including VAT up to maximum of 50 visitor's permits per year calendar year per address. Visitor day permits are available in the following dominations (a maximum of 50 visitor scratch cards can be bought per year, per address):

- 10 scratch cards for £15
- 20 scratch cards for £30
- 50 scratch cards for £75.

If a permit is lost or destroyed, a fee of £90.00 including VAT is payable for the issue of a replacement permit.

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

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

Payment too: Blenheim Gardens RMO

Bank: Lloyds

Sort code: 30-96-07

Account Number: 02278867

Please use your address as the payment reference number.

Permits will only be provided to residents who are not in arrears (Rent, Service Charges, Court Costs and so on). If your arrears are due to the impact of Covid-19, and the conduct of your payments were satisfactory prior to the pandemic, we will work out a repayment with you to ensure you can obtain a permit to park.

Vehicles parked on estates with expired permit or no tax will be considered as abandoned and removed.

Resident involvement

The RMO partnership with CEF Lyncx (Charity) is developing a summer activity plan for our young residents. To help develop the plan, the RMO is continuing to host virtual youth forum meetings to refine our plans. Our plans will be delivered in accordance to Government guidance.

The RMO is also continuing to provide study support via 'Zoom'. The Virtual Study Support application form is available below.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGNz8lwCbucHI1OwghWtNvGxlqrWNO-Ob9Hrea6zz8KI3HZQ/viewform>

If you would like to form part of the study support program but do not have access to a laptop and or an internet connection, please get in touch.

If you wish to form part of shaping our resident involvement programs, please contact Christian Johnson on telephone 020 7737 4274 or 07706 179 851.

Pest control service

The RMO is now able to attend to pest control issues. If you have a pest issue, please get in touch with us. The pest control service is available to both tenants and leaseholders.

We remind residents not to feed pigeons on the estate since this encourages vermin. Please do NOT put out rice and or bread for the birds to eat particularly in communal areas such as on grassed, in parking bays and so on. The RMO does however encourage feeding birds by appropriate means such as the use of bird feeders and boxes ONLY. You will be surprised at the variety of birds if you use the right food.

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 continuing to contact 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. A big 'THANK YOU' to our volunteers, you are doing a tremendous job.

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.

In addition to the above, the RMO is working in partnership with Lambeth's Emergency Food service and have secured hundreds of food parcels for residents that were delivered. If you require a food parcel and did not receive one, please get in touch with us.

Educational support

With the phased approach being taken to return children to school, the RMO recognises that there continues to be a need for educational support for parents. Our study support service is now available online. If you would like to register your child(ren) on to our study support program, please get in touch.

Clapham and Brixton Hill Better Start Area

Clapham and Brixton Hill Better Start can provide advice to families of young children aged 0-4 in Lambeth by telephone and can make referrals on your behalf to other agencies if needed.

If you need help or need to talk to someone please telephone

- 020 7926 2369 from 9am to 5pm; Monday to Friday or visit www.lambeth.gov.uk/childrens-centre-support

What support is available?

Children's centre staff are still available to help you and can offer:

- Someone to talk to about any concerns you have
- Home based activities for your young children
- Support with parenting
- Support with feeding your baby
- Support with feeding your family
- Support and signposting if you are concerned about your children's health or

- development
- Support with managing your money
- Support if you are at risk of homelessness
- Support with finding employment
- Support with your co-parenting relationship

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.

Service charge final accounts

The RMO has completed its service charge final accounts. For many there is an increase due to the upgrading and expansion of the estate lighting project. The RMO has absorbed a considerable amount of the project costs from its surplus fund. We are notifying all homeowners of what they need to pay to ensure the service charge balance is clear by the end of March 2021 and the final account will be dispatched in August. We thank you for your prompt payment.

Sharp decline in earnings

With 20% of workers nationally losing their income, we anticipate 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>

For self-employed workers, the Government has provided a taxable grant of 80% of your trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per month for the next 3 months. From June to August this will drop to 70% up to a maximum of £2190 per month. HMRC will use the average profits from tax returns in 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 to calculate the size of the grant. Must have traded in 2019-20; be currently trading at the point of application (or would be except for COVID 19) and intend to continue to trade in the tax year 2020 to 2021.

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/>

Hardship fund

The RMO has put in place a small hardship fund which allows us to offer emergency financial support to the residents in most need. If you are experiencing hardship during this period, please get in touch with us.

Thames water overcharges

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.

Private Gardens & waste

Please be reminded to maintain your private garden and not to allow growth beyond your front and rear boundaries.

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
- 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.

We have placed several social distancing signs around the estate to remind residents and visitors to the estate of the importance of social distancing. 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 commenced on 20th May with the sealing of the ballot boxes by the TMO client team in the community hub.

Ballot papers have been dispatched and will conclude on **30th June 2020**.

Please complete your ballot paper and return it to the RMO office, remembering to vote **‘Yes’** to retain your RMO, your local office and your local services!

Due to restriction on social distancing, the RMO will be inviting board members and shareholders only to attend the ballot count meeting. The meeting will be restricted to just 10 residents. A representative from the Council will also be in attendance as will be the RMOs independent advisors, Open Community. Watch out for your special invitation in the post.

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 for £5. 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 and large gatherings. 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

Bike repairs

If you have a bike that needs repair, we may be able to help. Please get in touch.

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

Do not leave home 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 Alert – we are in this together.

Blenheim Gardens RMO

If you would like this information in large print, in Braille, or in another format or language, please contact us on 020 7926 0158.

Español: Si desea esta información en otro idioma, rogamos nos llame al 020 7926 0158.

Français: Si vous souhaitez ces informations dans une autre langue veuillez nous contacter au 020 7926 0158.

GUIDANCE ON VISITING THE RMO OFFICE

Use this checklist to help you follow the procedures to assist you with visiting the RMO Estate Office.

BEFORE YOU COME TO THE RMO OFFICE

- ☒ The RMO Office will be open each **Monday and Thursday only from 2nd July 2020**
- ☐ Appointment times: **11 - 2 pm**
- ☐ To arrange an appointment time please call: **020 7926 0158**
Note: **Time slots will be strictly enforced.**
- ☐ An appointment system is being put in place to minimise queuing and to ensure that you can have an individual appointment to meet your needs.
- ☐ Only one person at a time is allowed into the reception area (except for adults with small children who can't be left at home)
- ☐ **DO NOT** come to the Estate Office if you or a member of your household has Covid-19 symptoms.
If it is an emergency then telephone: **020 7296 0158**
- ☐ If you are "shielding" or in a vulnerable group please telephone: **020 7926 0158** or email us on blenheimgardens@lambeth.gov.uk and let us know how we can be of service.
- ☐ Please check our website: www.bgrmo.org.uk and/or Facebook page: 'Blenheim Gardens RMO' for regular updates.



DROP IN SERVICES

- ☐ Only one person at a time is allowed into the reception area (except for adults with small children who can't be left at home)
- ☐ Follow the physical distancing markings when queuing outside and when entering the Estate Office.
- ☐ Use the hand sanitisers / wipes provided at the entrance to the Estate Office.

UNDERSTANDING THESE MEASURES

- ☐ These controls are being put in place to protect you are our valued tenants, our employees and contractors.
- ☐ Please be patient as our team members are trying to work in very difficult circumstances to provide a service to you.
- ☐ Please help us to maintain these measures for your own safety and wellbeing.

GUIDANCE AND GOOD PRACTICE

- ☐ Ensure you carry out regular cleaning of your home environment.
- ☐ Wash your hands frequently (6-10 times per day) and avoid touching your face.
- ☐ Cough / sneeze into a tissue or onto your sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- ☐ Keep physical distanced from others (2 metres).
- ☐ Wash clothes more regularly than usual.
- ☐ Avoid crowded places with poor ventilation.
- ☐ Limit contact with other people.
- ☐ Stay at home as much as possible.
- ☐ Keep up to date with Government Advice. <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>