

# Tenants of Private Landlords

## Update on Inspections(COVID-19)

### **What is the process for submitting a complaint in relation to property condition?**

**All complaints** should first be submitted by sending an email to the team at our email; [landlordregistration@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:landlordregistration@westlothian.gov.uk), and include a description of the issues you have, along with any photographic evidence you may have of the faults/issues within the property. If you have any issues sending us an email, please call on 01506 280000 and we will call you back.

Once the complaint is received, an officer from the team will contact you to discuss the case further and to request any further information if it is required. If we are struggling to help you diagnose the issue with just a photo, if you have the capability to talk to us via Whatsapp video chat or a similar video chat, we will work with you to enable that to happen.

### **Will an inspection be carried out?**

In line with guidance issued by the Scottish Government, inspections may be carried out by the Technical Officer where absolutely required; each case will be assessed on a case by case basis by the officer. If an officer determines that the case can be handled with photographic/video evidence an inspection will not be carried out to keep you and our staff safe.

### **We will not undertake any inspections if anyone in the household has Covid-19 symptoms.**

There may be some rare issues that we cannot diagnose or make a call on by speaking to you, and viewing photos/video. Where this is the case, we will arrange a visit – this will include a number of safety measures including protective clothing, safe distancing, and minimal contact with surfaces.

### **What will be required when an inspection is being carried out?**

Before an inspection takes place, the Technical Officer will contact the tenant to advise of our process, what we will do before and during our visit, and to advise what everyone in your household should do when we are there.

They will ask prescribed questions before entering the property to establish if anyone is shielding or has symptoms.

### **Before entry our staff will;**

- Thoroughly wash their hands/ apply sanitiser before using our vehicle, will apply sanitiser before entering the property, apply sanitiser prior to leaving the property.
- Avoid touching surfaces or personal items when inside the property (unless absolutely necessary for the purposes of the visit) and will maintain the above hand hygiene at all times.
- We will not remove or touch any items stored by customers in spaces we need to access, a good example of this are things being kept in boiler cupboards or in showers. If something is in the way, we will advise of this, stand back, and ask you to move it. If this cannot be done, we will not complete the inspection.

- Follow guidance on safe social distancing (maintaining a 2 metre distance from other people at all times)

### **What should I do during the inspection?**

We would ask that you follow our guidance so that you, the members of your household and our staff are kept safe:

- Please ensure you, and everyone in your household respects safe social distancing, and keeps 2 metres back from our staff during the visit – they will do the same.
- Isolate anyone in you household shielding or self-isolating – specific instructions are given for these people below.
- Keep control of any small children in your household, so they do not come into contact with our staff
- If you can wear a mask – we greatly appreciate this extra measure to ensure safety – we will ALWAYS wear a mask when inside your home
- If you can wipe down any surfaces we have to touch prior to the visit – for example door handles, or if you can open the doors for us, this would be appreciated
- Open doors and windows to increase circulation of fresh air whilst we are in the property
- Remove any obstacles to access in cupboards, hallways etc
- If you are in doubt, please ask the officer – they will guide you on keeping us and your household safe

### **Will I have to wear a mask during the inspection?**

Where possible, any tenant or landlord present should wear a mask while the inspection is taking place. We will do this too, and we appreciate your help in keeping everyone safe when we visit.

This will not be required if someone falls under the Scottish Governments exception to the requirement to wear a face mask for medical reasons.

### **What if someone within the household is shielding or self-isolating?**

An inspection will be carried out if a person within the household is shielding or self-isolating, but this will only be where we suspect the issue is urgent or a risk to safety. The Technical Officer will take additional measures at all times, and will be in full Protective Personal Equipment. This includes gloves, mask and protective clothing.

The person within the household who is shielding or self-isolating should remain within another room of the property with the door securely closed at all times during our visit, with no-one going in and out of the room where they are. They should enter the room prior to the inspection, and stay there until it is over and the Technical Officer has left the property. It should be made clear to the Technical Officer which room the person will be in so we do not enter by mistake. Doors and windows should be left open wherever possible to increase the ventilation and air circulation whilst we are visiting.

### **What will happen after the inspection?**

After the inspection has been carried out, the Technical Officer will provide a copy of their findings to the tenant; these findings will also be sent to the landlord or letting agent.

A reasonable timescale as to when the repairs should be rectified will be set with the landlord following our visit, with various factors considered when setting this timescale, including the standards that are required by law, and the severity of the issue we have seen.

Once the timescale has been set for repair/rectification, you will be contacted and advised of what has been agreed with your landlord.

In the majority of cases, a landlord will hire the appropriate trades to attend the property and rectify any repairs within a reasonable timescale. However, we are finding during the pandemic, that each company will have in place their own Covid-19 guidance and procedures – these may differ to ours slightly, but adherence with safe working procedures will help your repair happen without further delay. These procedures should be in line with guidance from the Scottish Government on safe systems of work, and safe practices to restrict transmission of Covid-19.

### **Once the repairs are done will a re-inspection be needed?**

No there will not be a re-inspection of the property. After repairs have been rectified the landlord will advise us of this, and will submit any evidence they have complied with recommendations. You will then be contacted by the Technical Officer to ensure you are happy with the outcome.

If you have any questions regarding the information contained within this document please contact the Landlord Registration Team by emailing [landlordregistration@westlothain.gov.uk](mailto:landlordregistration@westlothain.gov.uk)

### **Ensuring the safety of our staff**

It is critical to keeping our staff and your household safe that everyone understands and follows the safety measures we have outlined as being in place during our visit to the property.

If there are genuine medical reasons for people not being able to wear a mask, or for not being able to keep doors/windows open, then we will make an assessment of the situation, and the risks posed, and will advise you as to what will happen next. If people in the house are shielding, and are unable to isolate themselves from our staff, it may not be possible to complete the inspection to ensure their safety. However, we will always work to accommodate individual circumstances where possible if these are communicated to us.

**If you refuse** to comply with the guidelines without justifiable cause, or abuse our staff for requesting you follow this guidance, the inspection will end, and our staff will leave the property immediately. Please respect our staff, and work with them to keep us and your household safe.