

ancho NEWS

Spring 2020

From the whole staff team and board members across ANCHO and the Cairn Housing Group, we hope that you and your family, friends and neighbours are keeping well and healthy in these unprecedented and difficult times with the coronavirus emergency.

This newsletter details the service changes that are now in place, to protect our staff and tenants, and to keep the Association operating.

Our thoughts and attention are very much focused on maintaining services, advice and support to our tenants at this extremely difficult time. We know that many of you will be profoundly affected by the crisis, whether that is through the impact to your health, employment changes, family and caring responsibilities, or school closures. Everyone's normal lives have been turned upside down as we follow the common-sense advice to stay at home, socially distance and, where needed, self-isolate.

We are also very mindful of keeping our staff safe, and the ANCHO team are pulling together and responding very positively to face the challenges of this evolving situation. "Business as usual" has not really been possible, and we have had to make some difficult decisions where we cannot continue to provide our usual services, including office closures and an emergency-only repairs service.

We are acutely aware some of our team and contractors are very much on the frontline working at our properties and supporting tenants and other customers. Other

members of the staff team are all working from home to ensure the organisation keeps functioning and services carry on where possible. Everyone is pulling together, and I am proud to be part of a One Team approach to getting the job done.

Since the emergency arrangements came into place across the country, we have continued to review how we work and the range of services we can and cannot provide to customers, based on the best available advice and guidance from the Scottish Government and NHS. Our Boards have oversight of how we respond, and we are in regular contact with our partners, especially local councils, our contractors and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

We are very grateful for your continued support and cooperation as we respond to this evolving situation. Please keep checking our website for the latest updates and information.

We will get through this together. Please continue to stay home and stay safe.

Jason MacGilp
Group Chief Executive

Mary Black
ANCHO Chair

Michael Allan
Cairn Housing Group Chair

Changes to our services

To keep our staff and tenants safe we have made a range of changes to our services:

- We are only carrying out emergency repairs. Any non-emergency repairs reported will be logged and we hope to be able to schedule those as soon as possible when rules around the lockdown are relaxed
- All planned maintenance works are now on hold
- We have stopped letting empty homes. There may be some instances where we work with local authorities to provide homes where there is an urgent need
- We are providing a reduced ground maintenance service to our communities with a focus on ensuring safe access to tenants, residents, staff and contractors
- We are carrying out welfare checks to all tenants
- Gas safety checks will continue in line with government social distancing guidance, and this will be updated if the guidance changes
- Our office is closed to the public for the foreseeable future. Mail is being collected and distributed regularly but there will be a delay in responding to any post. If you can, please contact us on the phone or digitally.
- We have changed our contact centre opening hours to 9am - 4pm and are still available to help by calling 01294 313 121, emailing mail@ancho.co.uk or through www.ancho.co.uk

North Ayrshire Community Support Hubs

If you need help with things like getting food, making sure you have enough money or getting your prescription you can get help from the North Ayrshire Community Support Hubs. The hubs are not open for the public to visit but are a base for a small team of volunteers, alongside North Ayrshire Council and Health and Social Care Partnership staff. Regular updates on the range of local support is available on their website at www.northayrshire.community/covid-19-updates-for-communities.

Phonelines are open from at least 10am to 1pm Monday to Friday, with some local arrangements to have these open longer. You can leave a message, and someone will get back to you.

Irvine - Fullarton
07934 163 884
07398 109 924
01294 278 207

Irvine - Redburn
01294 310 000

Irvine - Vineburgh
07864 718 921
07398 108 915
01294 317 156

Kilwinning
01294 310 000

Three Towns
01294 310 000

Garnock Valley
01294 310000

North Coast
01294 310 000

Arran
07496 658 760
01770 600 532

Rent advice and support available

As a not-for-profit charity and housing association, rent is our primary source of income. It enables us to pay for the services we provide. It goes towards vital repairs and improvements, not only for your home, but for other homes ANCHO owns. It's important that tenants continue to pay their rent.

We understand that this is a worrying time for many of our tenants and that some of you may have lost your jobs or are working reduced hours. Our Housing team are here to support you and if you have any concerns about your ability to pay your rent, please contact them as soon as possible. The earlier we know, the sooner we can help. Our team can talk you through your situation and the options available to you, including access to benefits and other support available.

Those concerned about paying their rent can claim Universal Credit from the Department for Work and Pensions which includes support for housing costs, if eligible. The UK Government has introduced some temporary changes to make this easier. Go to www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus to find out more.

The UK Government has announced a range of benefits and support for employees, the self-

employed, and business owners. Please visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk for a guide to the support available and links for additional information. We are committed to ensuring that we provide advice and support to anyone who finds themselves in financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

We will work with you to find an arrangement that you can manage. When the current crisis eases, we can review this arrangement and agree a way for the arrears to be cleared over a longer period of time than we'd usually agree to.

There are a variety of ways you can pay your rent:

- Direct debit
- At a Post Office or a shop offering the PayPoint service
- Online via www.ancho.co.uk
- Using Allpay - either online, through their app or calling them on 0844 557 8321
- Calling us on 01294 313 121 to make a payment over the phone

Please do not pay by cheque at this time. Speak to us about alternative arrangements.

Please contact us if you need to speak with our Housing team who can provide specialist assistance.

How are we looking after our staff?

- Our office is closed and all office-based staff are working from home
- We have sought clarity on which of our staff should leave their homes to carry out essential work.
- We have been trying to source personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff who need them, however this has proved challenging due to the global shortage. We have given staff training to make sure they are following the correct health and safety procedures whilst at work
- We have updated our policies and procedures regarding staff absences to support those who are unwell or looking after children or other dependents
- When you report repairs, we are asking if you are self-isolating or quarantined.
- We are looking at roles and responsibilities of all staff. Some staff are being redeployed to assist with other duties including welfare calls to tenants
- Our services may be further impacted by staff absences or government guidance



Helping others without putting yourself, or them at risk

The Scottish Government are advising everyone to stay at home, particularly people with diagnosed coronavirus, those who show symptoms of the virus, those over the age of 70, pregnant women, or anyone who has an underlying health condition to stay at home.

If you are well and don't have to isolate you may want to help friends, family or neighbours who need help with shopping or errands. It's great to look out for each other but we all need to be careful not to inadvertently put ourselves or others at greater risk of infection.

- Try to pick up food for other people when you are doing your own shopping to limit trips outside
- Help someone to place an online shopping order. Many supermarkets are prioritising home deliveries for the most vulnerable

- Offer to pick up prescriptions when you go to the pharmacy, or help to arrange a home delivery
- If you are dropping off shopping, leave it on their doorstep for your neighbour to take into their home
- Wash your hands thoroughly for at least twenty seconds before and after helping with errands

Be careful not to share or accept personal details when you don't feel comfortable or do anything that makes you feel unsafe such as helping people in the dark or late at night.

Remember, you can also help those who are isolating with cheery phone calls, videocalls, or emails. Having someone to talk to, especially when conversation doesn't revolve around the virus is a good way to soothe anxiety and prevent loneliness in those who are isolating.



Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save lives.

The Government are encouraging everyone to stay at home

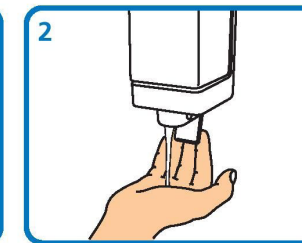
- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Do not meet others, even friends or family
- You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Please check www.gov.uk/coronavirus for up to date government guidance.

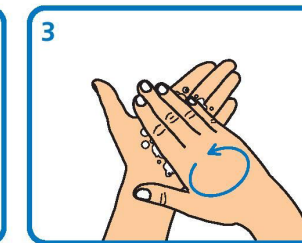
Hand-washing technique with soap and water



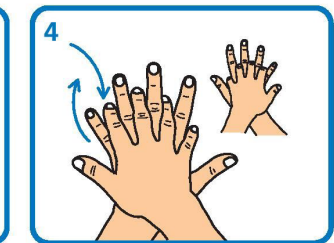
Wet hands with water



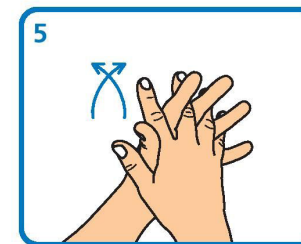
Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces



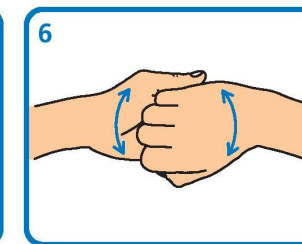
Rub hands palm to palm



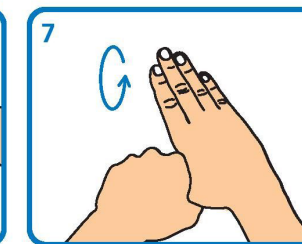
Rub back of each hand with palm of other hand with fingers interlaced



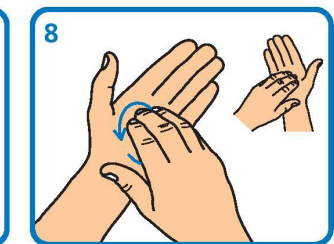
Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



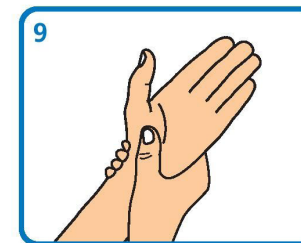
Rub with back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



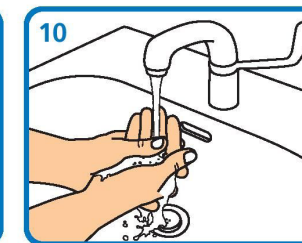
Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using a rotational movement



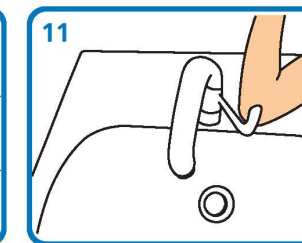
Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion



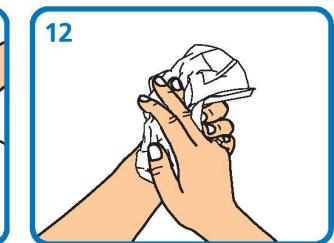
Rub each wrist with opposite hand



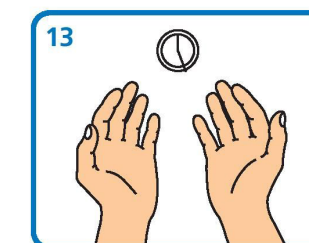
Rinse hands with water



Use elbow to turn off tap



Dry thoroughly with a single-use towel



Hand washing should take 15-30 seconds



Looking after your mental health in challenging times

We all have to think about our mental health, and now more than ever, it's important to make sure we try to protect our mental wellbeing. Many of us are feeling worried or stressed about how coronavirus could affect our lives, and those of our loved ones.

We are now having to spend more time at home, perhaps isolated from the friends, family and other relationships that we know are vital to keeping ourselves mentally healthy. It may also be harder for us to do the things that normally help keep us well.

There are things we can do to look after our mental wellbeing during this time.

Move more every day

Being active reduces stress, increases energy levels, can make us more alert and help us sleep better. Even at home, there will be lots of ways to exercise and keep your body moving. Getting exercise doesn't need to be difficult – clear some space in the living room and try one of the 10-minute workouts from the NHS. Why not jump on the Joe Wicks (The Bodycoach) bandwagon? PE with Joe can be found on his YouTube channel and streams Monday to Friday at 9am.

Try a relaxation technique

Relaxing and focusing on the present can help improve your mental health and lighten negative feelings.

Try some different meditation or breathing exercises to see what helps.

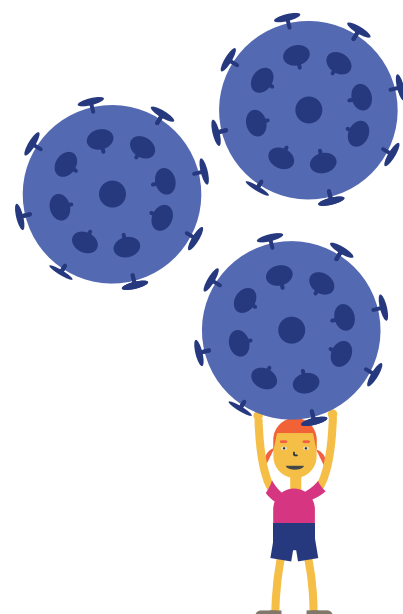
For example, sometimes we can be so tense that we do not even remember what being relaxed feels like. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches you to recognise when you are starting to get tense and how to relax.

A range of relaxation techniques, including progressive muscle relaxation are available from the NHS.

Connect with others

Staying at home, especially if you live on your own, can feel lonely. Find creative ways to keep in touch with co-workers, friends, family, and others to help you (and them) feel more connected and supported.

Explore ways of connecting that work for you, whether that's over the phone, social media, or video-chat. This could be anything, from sharing a cup of tea over a video call, playing an online game together, or simply sending a supportive text message.



Take time to reflect and practice self-compassion

Make time every day to reflect on what went well. It's important to recognise your successes and the things you are grateful for, no matter how small. Consider keeping a gratitude journal each day where you could write two or three of these things every night before you go to bed.

Mindfulness techniques may also help you focus on the present rather than dwelling on unhelpful thoughts. Headspace, found on your app store, have introduced a free collection, weathering the storm, of guided meditations and exercises specifically designed to help them manage stress, anxiety, and uncertainty through mindfulness.

Improve your sleep

Feelings of uncertainty and changes to daily life may mean you have more difficulty sleeping.

There is a lot you can do to improve your sleep. Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even at the weekend if you can, and try to get some natural sunlight (by opening your curtains and windows) where possible. This helps to regulate your body clock which can help you sleep better.

Wind down before bed by avoiding using your phone, tablet, computer or TV for an hour before bedtime.

Manage your mood with food and staying hydrated

Knowing what foods, we should and shouldn't be eating can be really

confusing, especially when it feels like the advice changes regularly. However, evidence suggests that as well as affecting our physical health, what we eat may also affect the way we feel. Improving your diet and drinking between 6-8 glasses of water a day may help to improve your mood, give you more energy and help you think more clearly.

Switch off

It's OK to turn off the news and social media for a bit. It's very tempting to watch and watch (and then watch some more) all the information that's coming in. But you don't have to do that to yourself. Avoid news that could make you feel anxious and choose the stuff that's practical and helpful.

Mental Health Support

These organisations can offer support if you need to speak to someone urgently:

Breathing Space

breathingspace.scot
0800 83 85 87

Offers a free, confidential phone and web-based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.

Samaritans

samaritans.org
116 123 (Freephone)

24-hour emotional support for anyone struggling to cope.

Shout

giveusashout.org
text 85258

Shout is volunteer-run and is the UK's first 24/7 crisis text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere.

Helpful resources

Older people, and those caring for the over 70s

Age UK
ageuk.org.uk
0800 12 44 222

Those with a disability

Disability Information Scotland
disabilityscot.org.uk
phone 0300 323 9961 or text 0778 620 0707

Those who are worried about losing their job, or seeking advice regarding employment rights, careers, or redundancy

- citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/
- skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
- acas.org.uk

For debt advice

- StepChange
stepchange.org
0800 138 1111
- National Debtline
nationaldebtline.org
0808 808 4000

For parents

- Parentline
children1st.org.uk
08000 28 22 33
- Parent Club
parentclub.scot
- One Parent Families Scotland
opfs.org.uk
0808 801 0323

Those with dementia or their carers

- Alzheimers Scotland
alzscot.org
0808 808 3000

For households looking for advice on reducing energy bills and staying warm

- Energy Saving Trust
energysavingtrust.co.uk
0808 808 2282

Those with learning disabilities or their carers

- Enable Scotland
enable.org.uk
0300 0200 101
- Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities
sclld.org.uk
0141 248 3733

Those with autism or their carers

- Scottish Autism
scottishautism.org
01259 222022
- National Autistic Society
autism.org.uk

For anyone in Scotland experiencing domestic abuse or forced marriage, and for others supporting them

- Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline
sdafmh.org.uk
0800 027 1234
- Scottish Women's Aid
womensaid.scot
0800 027 1234

For anyone affected by sexual violence

- Rape Crisis Scotland
rapecrisisScotland.org.uk
08088 01 03 02

Are your details up to date?

It's really important that we have up to date contact details for you, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak.

You can update your contact details by phoning us or updating them through our website:

www.ancho.co.uk/updatesmydetails

Did you know...

If you have children at school who qualify for free school meals, your local authority are now providing an alternative arrangement? Check with your local authority to find out the details as eligibility and schemes vary across the country.



If you are extremely vulnerable because of a medical condition

You are 'extremely vulnerable' if you have certain medical conditions – for example, severe asthma or cancer.

NHS Scotland has contacted people who are extremely vulnerable. The letter will give information on how to protect yourself.

You must shield yourself for 12 weeks, starting when the NHS contacted you, by:

- Staying at home
- Avoiding all non-essential contact with other people, including those in your household

If you think you are extremely vulnerable, but NHS Scotland has not contacted you, contact the helpline for vulnerable people on 0800 111 4000. You can read more about shielding and which groups are 'extremely vulnerable' on the NHS Inform website at www.nhsinform.scot

The letter from NHS Scotland is evidence that you should be shielding and should be shown to your employer to show that you cannot work outside the home.

The Scottish Government has a new helpline for vulnerable people at high risk of coronavirus. You can reach them on 0800 111 4000.



Our mission is to create neighbourhoods where people want to live

Our head office:
ANCHO Ltd.
Sovereign House,
Academy Road,
Irvine KA12 8RL

Our website:
www.ancho.co.uk

Our phone number:
01294 313 121

Our email:
mail@ancho.co.uk

Part of the

cairn
HOUSING GROUP

This newsletter is available on CD, in braille, in large print and in community languages.

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