

Stay safe, stay well: new priorities shape emergency service

Dear all

None of you will be surprised to find that almost everything in this newsletter concerns the coronavirus pandemic. It has changed all our lives in the most appalling way and with horrifying speed.

In the last few weeks we have all had to rapidly change our way of living. Some of you have been ill or had family or friends fall ill or worse. I know some are now suffering extreme grief.

Others have been badly affected by losing part or more of your household income and many of you are suffering rising levels of stress at home. Our homes were never designed to be used as home, workplace and school room.

We are all to some degree struggling with anxiety and fear. We have no idea how long the virus will remain an active threat but it seems very unlikely that normal life will return anytime soon.

But Barnsbury's unique strength is pulling together as a community to support each other. I am therefore hugely encouraged to see many of you finding ways to do this, even with social distancing.

As your landlord some of the ways we would usually step in to support this - providing free venues, a lot more staff support and our own facilities - are for now of limited use or simply unsafe.

We have, however, been able to keep core services going by getting all staff working from home, using the internet to access our office systems. So now, having ironed out most technical hiccups, we are focused on one priority: the health and wellbeing of every one of you.

SUSAN FRENCH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Susan French

CORONAVIRUS LATEST

Emergency service only until pandemic eases

Until the virus is brought under control, we have had to close our offices (*see also page two*) and cut services back to the essentials. For now, these are:

- * **gas safety checks** to make sure the gas supply and any gas-fuelled appliances in your home are safe to use
- * **emergency repairs** if something goes wrong with your home that is a risk to your health and safety or to the property
- * **cleaning shared parts of buildings**, and using disposable anti-viral wipes to disinfect door handles and buzzers.

Social distancing, DIY and antisocial activities

We're pleased to report very few complaints of antisocial behaviour since the lockdown began. But they are starting to trickle in.

Not everyone is respecting the 2-metre rule for social distancing, on the top site at Morland Mews in particular. If it carries on we will be reluctantly forced to close this rare bit of public space when it has never been needed so much.

DIY is a second bug-bear.

It is understandable that you want to use your extra time at home productively but please keep any noisy activities to short bursts only and at a reasonable time of day.

Please do report antisocial behaviour to us so we can take quick and appropriate action.

See also pages 2, 3 and 4

Need to get in touch with us?

CONTACTING US DURING LOCKDOWN

With all our offices closed to visitors until further notice, and almost all staff working from their own homes, the best way to get in touch with us is by phoning the main number or emailing us.

☎ 020 7704 2324

✉ info@barnsbury.org.uk

Emailing us

Emails sent to info@barnsbury.org are checked throughout the day by some of our staff. They will forward your email to the colleague who is best able to deal with the matter.

Phoning us

Call ☎ 020 7704 2324 between 9.30am-12 noon and 2-5.30pm and your call will be picked up by one of us working from home. If whoever picks up the call cannot help, they will transfer your call or take a message.

Please do not call between 12 noon and 2pm. We use this time to catch up with colleagues, hold online meetings and take a break. The answerphone is off as we cannot pick up any messages left then. It is turned back on out of normal office hours.

BANK HOLIDAY CLOSING

A reminder that we will be closed for the two May bank holidays - **Monday 8** and **Friday 25 May**. If you need an emergency repair on either day call ☎ 0300 131 7300.

Medical scrubs: call for fabric donations from Morland Mews

Gissing Walk tenant Jeanetta has turned her talent for sewing to excellent use, making much needed medical scrubs for health workers from her home in Morland Mews.

More fabric needed

But Jeanetta urgently needs more fabric suitable for scrubs.

'I'm a one-man band so even one sheet is very welcome as it takes time to make each set of scrubs,' Jeanetta says.

Jeanetta is happy to collect donations from your doorstep or you can drop them on her doorstep at 18 Gissing Walk.

Do you have any spare cotton or poly-cotton you could donate to Jeanetta? Ideally it should be a plain colour (small pattern okay), not white preferably, not too lightweight and at least 2 metres long. Also useful are unwanted bedsheets or duvet covers still in a good condition.

If you'd like Jeanetta to pick up any donations from your own doorstep email her at jeanettapozniak@gmail.com

A whopping thank you from Jeanetta (and from us) to those of you have very kindly donated fabric already.

Coronavirus update contd: pandemic service priorities

All offices closed

All our offices are now closed to visitors, with staff turning up only to do tasks they cannot do from home. They are under strict instructions not to let anyone in so please, for your safety and theirs, do not call at the office.

Help is available

The council is working with local voluntary and mutual aid groups to coordinate free support for Islington's most vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

If you need food or medicine delivered, want legal advice or just want to hear a friendly voice over the phone, get in touch.

Call We Are Islington.

Helpline: 020 7527 8222

Minicom: 020 7527 1900

Email: weareislington@islington.gov.uk

For British Sign Language, use **Signvideo**

Phone lines are open Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 1pm, Sunday closed.

If you or someone in your home is ill or shielding

If someone in your home is ill, self-isolating or shielding please tell us so we can make sure you are getting support. And if we or one of our contractors have made an appointment to visit you or do work in your home please call us to cancel.

Universal credit

If you are trying to make a new claim for universal credit please let us know. The Department of Work & Pensions is dealing with more claims than it has ever had because of the pandemic.

Contact Priscilla or Felicity so we can do all we can to help keep your rent account up-to-date.

Pay your rent please!

Our main service is putting a roof over your head so please pay your rent as usual. If you are struggling please tell us as soon as you can. The more we know, the better we can help.

Cleaning and sanitation

Shared areas in blocks of flats are being cleaned as usual but a new priority for our cleaners is disinfecting any surfaces you or your neighbours might touch.

Our cleaners are using disposal anti-viral wipes to clean door handles and buzzers. These are binned afterwards to avoid any risk of cross-contamination.

Fire safety

Please tell us if your **smoke or carbon monoxide alarm** isn't working so we can repair it.

As the weather gets warmer so does the temptation to have a barbecue. **Please do not have a barbecue on a balcony.** It's not safe and it is not pleasant for your neighbours.

Gas safety inspections

These important checks are still being done, but with safeguards for your health and safety and that of our staff. **If you are 'shielding' from coronavirus or are over 70 and self-isolating we will call you when the check is due.** We may be able to postpone your gas check for three months then get it done very quickly after that.

Bins and recycling

Thank you to all of you who are keeping your rubbish and recycling indoors until the day before the bins are emptied. This really is helping to keep at bay any unwelcome additional health risks.

For those who aren't being so careful do not put your bags out any earlier than the evening before the collection date. We've had at least one report of someone who put out black bags six days early. Collection days have not changed.

Rent statements

You should now have your rent statement for the 1 Jan-31 March period. Get in touch if you have a query. **Please also let us know if you would rather get your rent statements by email in future.**

No flush emergencies

We are getting a lot of emergency calls about blocked toilets. Most are caused by trying to flush away things that shouldn't have gone in. **The only things that should go in a toilet are toilet paper, water and bodily waste. Anything else should go in your bin.** If we keep getting calls from homes where the cause is trying to flush other things we'll send them the bill.

Have you had Covid-19 and recovered?

The government has launched a survey to help it get a better understanding of how the coronavirus is spreading.

The survey will ask who has or has had it (no matter how mild), and where in England you are.

The NHS will use the responses to work out how to avoid more waves of infection breaking out once lockdown rules are relaxed.

You can fill in the survey for yourself or someone else, like a child or an elderly relative. If a child is 13 or over, check that they are happy for you to do this.

<http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus-status-checker>

SOLACE IN ISLINGTON

DOMESTIC ABUSE: NEED HELP NOW?

CALL THE LONDON FREEPHONE ☎ 0808 802 5565

There has been a shocking rise in abuse since lockdown. Solace in Islington helps men and women. Its support is free and confidential. For advice call ☎ 020 3795 5070 or email advocacy@solacewomensaid.org, Mon-Friday, 9am to 5pm.

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER NOW CALL THE POLICE ON 999.

Finding lockdown stressful? Why not sign up for online mindfulness, every Tuesday at 2pm

Tenant Sila is inviting you to join her one-hour online **Angel Central Mindfulness sessions** every Tuesday. You can do this from your own home using the online conferencing app Zoom.

What you can expect

After check-in you will go through a couple of short practices, each lasting from 10 to 20 minutes.

The practices are designed to help you feel calmer and adapt to the way things are now.

'One thing the coronavirus has taught me is there are new ways of being with the world and with people,' Sila says.

Sila has already done closed drop-in sessions this way with a vulnerable group and tells us members of the group have found the sessions very helpful.

Sila is a qualified Breathworks mindfulness teacher with a certificate in counselling skills.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MINDFULNESS VIA ZOOM

To find out more about the sessions and how to join from your home using Zoom, email Sila at angelcentral.mindfulness@gmail.com

ABOUT BARNSBURY *News*

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To contact us or contribute write to 16b Cloudesley Street, N1 OHU, email info@barnsbury.org or call ☎ 020 7704 2324. We have limited space so may edit contributions. We will not print anything cruel, libellous or defamatory.

Your contributions welcome

If you or a group of you would like to write an opinion piece or share good news (or bad!) or just ask what others think, send it in. We'd also love your photos or pictures. Please send them to Dean formatted as large jpg files.

WORRIED BY RISING POWER BILLS? *

CONTACT GREEN DOCTORS FOR FREE EXPERT ADVICE ON WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOME LESS POWER HUNGRY

☎ **0300 365 5003**

✉ greendoctorsLDN@groundwork.org.uk

Prevention is better than an emergency

A warning that heartless scammers are exploiting people worried about the coronavirus. Since February alone, victims of 'coronavirus fraud' have between them lost more than £800k.

There are also rising numbers of phishing emails, trying to trick people into clicking on viral attachments or into sharing sensitive personal information.

Scams are including offers of:

- * coronavirus testing kits
- * vaccines and 'miracle' cures
- * over-priced and fake anti-bacterial and viral products
- * shopping or medication collection services
- * offers to 'clean' your home of coronavirus.

If someone tries to pressure you they're very likely up to no good. So don't be rushed. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.

What else can you do?

- * Only buy from trusted sellers. Do your research first and be alert to fake (sometimes very well done) websites.
- * Use a credit card to shop online, if you have one.
- * Don't share personal or financial info with any stranger who calls out of the blue.
- * Never click on links or attachments in suspect emails.

For advice, call Citizens Advice on ☎ 0808 223 11 33

To report a scam, call Action Fraud on ☎ 0300 123 2040

Contact your bank if you think you have been scammed.

SUDOKU

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		8		4			3	5
	6		8				1	4
1	4				5		8	
8				7		3		
4			3	5	2			
7				9		5		

COURTESY OF OPENSKY.CA/SUDOKU

To solve the puzzle, each 3x by 3x box and each column going across and down must have all the numbers 1 to 9, with no number used twice. The sum total of each box = 45.

Answers in the next issue of *Barnsbury News*

JUNIOR CORNER

NEW!! EXTENDED DEADLINE

POSTER COMPETITION for children only

There is still time to enter our poster competition and be in with a chance of winning a £20 voucher to spend at Amazon.

Your poster should show what people can do to stay as safe as possible from coronavirus and other nasty bugs. We know washing your hands properly is very important. So too is not touching your face outside and keeping 2 metres from people who don't live in your home.



But what else? Scientists are finding new ways to keep safe from the virus daily. Do your research then get to work with your pens and paints!

Deadline: send a photo of your poster design to dean@barnsbury.org by 20 May.

Winner! We'll put the very best posters up in all our buildings, and send the winning designer a £20 Amazon voucher.