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Dear Colleagues

We are writing to you following the First Minister's announcement on Monday 4th January. It is now a legal requirement to stay at home in level 4 areas except for essential purposes, with the current position being similar to the lockdown of March last year. The island areas currently in level 3 will remain there, but this will be kept under review.

The safety of your workforce, tenants, and wider communities is an absolute priority at this time, as it has been throughout the pandemic response. We understand the anxiety that everyone is facing just now, and that this may be greater for those working in public facing roles. Everyone of us has a role to play in suppressing the virus and ensuring we follow the public health advice.

The [Scottish Government guidance](#) published following the announcement contains examples of what may be a reasonable excuse to leave home such as for work, education, or essential shopping. This also links to the suite of guidance that has been coproduced over the past year and remains in place.

In relation to housing, reasonable excuses to leave home includes activities in connection with moving home (including viewing a property), or for activities in connection with the maintenance, purchase, sale, letting, or rental of residential property that the person owns or is otherwise responsible for. The [current guidance on moving home](#) sets out that property viewings should be virtual first, and physical viewings should only be conducted where a prospective tenant is being offered a rental property and a virtual viewing is not possible.

The guidance also confirms that people can only continue to work in other people's homes in Level 4 areas to provide essential services including urgent repairs and maintenance and work to support a home move, for example furniture removal. Local services are best placed to decide what is deemed "essential".

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As anyone who is able to work from home must now do so, we are asking all organisations and businesses, including councils and social landlords, to look again at their operations and make sure that every single function that can be done by people working from home, is being done in that way.

With that in mind it is important that essential housing services to tenants such as urgent repairs, voids processing, allocations and lettings, dealing with anti-social behaviour, tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention work continue. However given the increased public health risk, and the need to safeguard health and protect our workforce and communities, it is of increased importance that these services are delivered in a manner that minimises the risk of transmission. The lessons learnt since March 2020 and the way in which services have been redesigned to be delivered in as safe a manner as possible provides an excellent basis to ensure services can continue at this time. It is however important that you keep existing procedures and guidance under review, engaging and involving Trade Union representatives, to see if any further improvements can be made to further protect your workforce, tenants and wider communities from the virus.

[Guidance](#) was issued during the first lock down on cleaning and hygiene advice for multi storeys and high density flats. This guidance does not replace the need for landlords to carry out their own risk assessments in relation to the current more transmissible virus and to consider producing their own local guidance to support staff and keep people safe. Cleaning of communal areas is an important aspect in trying to suppress the spread of the virus and we recognise that landlords/organisations will be best placed to make decisions on local circumstances, keeping practices under review.

Despite this challenging start to 2021, keeping staff, tenants and communities safe and healthy remains our shared priority. We want to thank you for all that you have done, and are doing, to keep services moving at this time.

We remain hopeful that this year will bring better times.



KEVIN STEWART



COUNCILLOR KELLY PARRY

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