

# Rent, Income & Coronavirus

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Will THCH be offering me a rent payment holiday because of Coronavirus?**

THCH recognise that these are uncertain times for a lot of people and that coronavirus has had a negative impact upon many of our tenants' finances.

Whilst we are sympathetic to this, THCH is a charitable organisation and income received through rent and service charges is our only source of income. We need to continue to charge rent in order to enable us to continue to provide services for all our residents.

We do recognise that despite help made available by the government, some of our tenants may still experience financial hardship. THCH are happy to discuss interim payment arrangements to help tenants in that situation, however we are unable to offer a payment holiday or rent free period.

### **What if Coronavirus means I can't pay my rent?**

The government has put in place a number of financial support measures aimed at helping people who have lost their income as a result of coronavirus. Part of this is designed to ensure that tenants can continue to pay their rent.

If you are struggling to pay your rent because you are having financial difficulties it is important that you contact us as soon as possible so that we can see how best we can help you. Please call us on **020 7780 3070** or email **[customerservices@thch.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@thch.org.uk)**.

THCH's Income Team and Tenancy Support Officers will be able to offer you help and assistance with financial and benefit matters.

### **Can THCH offer me any financial help with my rent?**

THCH has a Tenancy Support service that can help ensure that you are able to maximise your income by claiming all of the benefits and financial support that you are entitled to.

### **My income is changing as I think I might be made redundant, what can I do?**

The government has announced a job retention scheme which may be able to prevent the need for your employer to make you redundant. You would be classed as a furloughed worker, which means you are kept on your employer's payroll, rather than being laid off.

Your employer will be able to claim up to 80% of your wages to a maximum of £2,500 per month and the government will pay towards some National Insurance and pension costs. If your employer has said that they may have to make you redundant as they can't afford your wage, ask them to contact HMRC to discuss the scheme and see if it can help.

If you are an employee on a zero hour contract and are on the PAYE system then you should also be covered by the scheme.

### **I'm self-employed and can't work due to the Coronavirus, what support is available for me?**

The government has announced that it is introducing the Coronavirus Self Employed Income Support Scheme. This will pay 80% of your monthly profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per

month for three months. To be eligible you must earn more than half your income from self-employment and have a trading profit of less than £50,000. HMRC will check eligibility against existing information and will contact those who are eligible about making an online application.

### **I've lost my job or my earnings have gone down, what should I do?**

If you are no longer working or your hours have been reduced you may be eligible to claim Universal Credit. Universal Credit is a payment to help with your living costs and is paid monthly.

What's more, from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 the government will be increasing Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element by up to £86.67 per month for one year. This measure will apply to all new and existing Universal Credit claimants and is in addition to the planned annual uprating in benefits. Existing Universal Credit claimants will benefit straight away, as will new claimants who become unemployed or whose earnings or work hours decrease because of coronavirus.

To claim Universal Credit visit [www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim) or if you are unable to do so online call **0800 328 5644**.

In addition, you may want to speak to your employer about the government job retention scheme to see if they would be prepared to consider keeping you on the payroll as a furloughed worker.

### **I can't work because I'm self-isolating or sick, what help is there for me?**

If you are sick or self-isolating and cannot work, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). SSP is £94.25 per week and can be paid for up to 28 weeks. To qualify, a worker must earn at least £118 per week.

SSP is now available for eligible individuals diagnosed with Covid-19 or those who are unable to work because they are self-isolating, in line with government advice. This has now been extended to those in the same household caring for self-isolators. This is in addition to the change announced that SSP will be payable from day 1 instead of day 4 for affected individuals.

If you are not eligible to receive SSP then you can still claim Universal Credit and / or contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

### **Is there any other financial or practical help available?**

A number of banks and utility companies are offering help for those effected financially by the coronavirus:

- *Banks* – If the coronavirus has effected your income, you should contact your bank and explain your situation. Each bank will consider what help it may give on a case by case basis. Some banks are also offering possible payment holidays on loans and credit-card payments or allowing people to access their fixed-savings accounts without a penalty. It is advisable to give them a call to see if they can help.
- *Energy providers* – The disconnection of credit meters has been completely suspended during the crisis. In addition, if you are self-isolating and unable to top up your pre-payment meter you can:

- Nominate a third party for credit top ups;
- Have a discretionary fund added to your credit; or
- Have a pre-loaded top up card sent so that your supply is not interrupted

If you are struggling to manage repayments to your energy provider contact them to see what help they can provide. New guidance means that your debt repayments and bill payments could be reassessed, reduced or paused where necessary. You should contact your energy provider for more information.

- *Water companies* – Water companies have agreed to help customers in a variety of ways because of the coronavirus. Thames Water have set up a “flexible payment period” for customers to either temporarily pause or reduce payments. More details can be found on the Thames Water website at [www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk) by searching for “**coronavirus**”.

### **Is there anywhere else I can go for further financial advice?**

There are a number of local and national organisations that provide impartial independent debt, benefit and money advice. The Tower Hamlets website provides a comprehensive list of such organisations. For more information on the services available go to [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk) and search for “**Local and national advice services**”.