

The Rt Honourable Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

31 March 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Covid-19 key issues for Retirement Housing and Extra Care Developments**

Firstly we wish you a speedy recovery from your illness.

We are writing to you jointly on behalf of our members who develop and manage Retirement Housing and Extra Care developments. These forms of specialist housing represent independent living for older people with a range of on-site communal areas and care and support services. The average age of someone moving into such a development is currently 80 with the majority being single older women.

Residents in developments of this sort are often frail and vulnerable and may have no local family or limited social connections, hence the decision to move into accommodation of this sort in the first place, where security, companionship and safety are often key attributes.

As a consequence, the service offered by our scheme managers and other support staff is crucial to the support and wellbeing of residents during the present crisis. In Retirement Housing, this involves management of the estate and provision of domestic assistance to residents. In Extra Care Housing, managers also deliver personal care. In both types of schemes, scheme managers are a first point of contact for all residents, supporting and signposting them to additional services as well as managing the development to ensure it is safe and well maintained. Some scheme managers are resident on site and in the case of Extra Care Housing there is 24 hour on-site care provision. In these very difficult times, our management teams are providing huge reassurance to isolated older people who are, rightly, distanced from their families and usual support networks.

To ensure they are able to carry on doing this vital job and mitigate reliance on other hard-pressed health and social care services, we need to raise the following issues as a matter of urgency:

**Providing support to self-isolating residents:** Our members are already doing all they can to support vulnerable residents, but it is likely that they will need to call on the services of local volunteer groups and/or of local authorities. We would be grateful if local authorities and volunteer groups and the new Gold Command Groups could be advised to ensure that Retirement Housing and Extra Care schemes are included in the list of places to which they should offer support. A comprehensive list of such schemes in each area can be accessed on the EAC First Stop Accommodation Directory at <http://www.housingcare.org/housing-care/search.aspx> where the advanced search facility will allow users to identify retirement and Extra Care schemes by area.

**Protective clothing:** We note and applaud the major effort that is currently underway to distribute supplies of PPE. We note that supplies are promised to “care homes, hospices and home care providers”, but there is no specific mention of Retirement Housing and Extra Care schemes. It is very likely that scheme managers in both Extra Care and Retirement Housing schemes will have to have some kind of contact with scheme residents who potentially have the virus. We urge that the definition of organisations that supply care is broadened to include establishments which are registered with EAC so that protective clothing can be made available to them and also that when suitable clothing and equipment is available, scheme managers should be trained in protective clothing and diagnostics, possibly via community nurses.

**Access to COVID-19 testing as such time as it is available:** We respect the demands on testing equipment and would ask that as testing capacity increases managers and support staff at Retirement Housing and Extra Care developments are recognised as an early priority so that they are not forced to absent themselves from their job unnecessarily at this critical time.

**Guidance on what to do when an elderly resident contracts Covid-19:** Our scheme managers are likely to be a first port of call for a resident who feels unwell. It is important that we establish national and local protocols about who to notify and to make contingency plans about how the situation will be addressed if the decision is made not to admit an elderly person to hospital. What support can be provided by an estate manager, what support will come

from domiciliary care services (and who will organise this if they are not already on site) and what back-up is available from the NHS. Please advise who our members contact at local level to make these links. National guidance from you would be extremely helpful to clarify these respective roles.

**Keyworker status:** We believe it is important that the vital roles of development managers in retirement schemes are included in the scope of the defined key worker roles. It would help our members enormously if the status of their scheme managers was confirmed as key workers. Although various verbal assurances have been given that they are included in the key worker definition for the purposes of handling the Covid-19 situation we would be grateful to receive confirmation. Similarly, the role of people who provide technical assistance such as lift maintenance and cleaning in our developments should be recognised in the same way given the importance of these services in helping the residents to lead a normal life.

You and your team have our full support and we stand ready to assist in any way that we can at this immensely challenging time.

Yours sincerely



Sam Gibson  
Chair  
ARHM



Stephen Ladyman  
Chair  
RHG



John Slaughter  
Chair RHBG  
HBF



cc Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

## **WHO WE ARE**

### **ARHM – Association of Retirement Housing Managers**

The Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) is an organisation committed to improving the lives of older people. We achieve this by raising standards in Retirement Housing. Through our 2016 Government-backed Code of Practice, we ensure leaseholders, their families, scheme and site managers and people working in the sector know what Retirement Housing providers legally must do and what they should do.

Our mission is to continually raise standards in older people's accommodation, by promoting best practice and ethical management amongst those responsible for Retirement Housing. By setting standards for membership of our association and providing training and education to members, we improve the quality and professionalism of the leaseholder retirement sector.

### **RHG - Retirement Housing Group**

The Retirement Housing Group (RHG) is a membership organisation working in the housing and care sectors. Our aim is to increase housing choices for older people by advancing and promoting the case for sustainable Retirement Housing. We have been an independent industry body since 2011. Our members include providers of market and affordable housing and specialist professionals. Members' schemes range from age exclusive and sheltered housing through to extra care accommodation.

We work both nationally and locally on raising the profile of Retirement Housing and tackling barriers to increase the supply, range and quality of accommodation for older people. Our key activities include influencing planning, housing, legal and housing management policy by bringing issues and solutions to the opinion-formers.

### **HBF – Retirement Home Builders Group within the HBF**

The Retirement Home Builders Group is the forum for members of the Home Builders Federation (HBF) who develop specialist and other housing for older people. The Group discusses and develops policy proposals relating to the provision of Retirement Housing and makes representations to government and other bodies on these with the objective of improving the overall supply of

such housing. The HBF is the principal trade association for private sector home builders in England and Wales.