

Critical worker criteria

National Housing Federation Guidance for housing associations

20 January 2021

Summary

Housing association staff play a critical role in responding to the Covid-19 crisis, in particular by:

- Providing vital care and support services to vulnerable customers both in supported and specialist accommodation, and to any tenants facing isolation or hardship because of the effect of the crisis.
- Providing critical safety functions to keep homes safe, including waking watches in high rise buildings with unsafe cladding, and emergency repairs for safety-critical issues like gas systems.

This guidance is intended for housing association staff and schools working to ensure critical key workers can remain at work, and schools are able to keep children and staff safe. It has been issued by the National Housing Federation to help members interpret the rules in the context of the new national lockdown. Please note that it does not constitute official guidance; it is designed to help conversations with staff and schools and help organisations plan essential work.

The guidance

When making decisions, housing associations will pay careful consideration to balancing the need to continue delivering vital frontline services with the need to protect the population and wider society by minimising the number of children attending school.

The [government's guidance](#) sets out broad categories of worker. Housing associations might consider their staff to fall under the following categories:

Government guidance	How housing associations should interpret this
<p>Health and social care</p> <p>“This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK’s health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment”</p>	<p>This would include all housing association or contracted staff delivering care services, and staff working in any supported or sheltered housing setting, hostels, and outreach workers delivering key services, for example around street homelessness or drug and alcohol support. These are people who are critical in helping people stay safe and preventing homelessness and hospital admissions as well as supported people coming home from hospital.</p> <p>This would also include administrative and other staff critical to supporting any of the functions outlined above.</p>
<p>Key public services</p> <p>This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.</p>	<p>Frontline housing associations staff carry out a number of key public and other critical services. The following should be considered as critical roles:</p> <p>Staff supporting vulnerable or other tenants to deal with the effects of the crisis – for example by ensuring day-to-day support during isolation, or help with accessing benefits.</p> <p>Staff directly responsible for maintaining the safety and security of social housing tenants, including fire wardens conducting waking watches, repairs staff necessary to conduct emergency repairs critical to safety (for example, gas safety engineers) where these can’t be delayed, and staff critical to ensuring that these functions are carried out.</p> <p>The 2021 lockdown restrictions permit Housing associations to continue to carry out non-emergency work in people’s homes. This could come under the category of ‘frontline service’ but organisations should be mindful of the local context and pressures if including these staff as ‘critical workers’.</p>