



ISHA Residents Newsletter Autumn 2020

Welcome to the ISHA resident newsletter!

This is the first email and text newsletter to residents, following the successful weekly updates we sent out during lockdown. We hope you find it useful. With restrictions changing regularly, we will continue to send out coronavirus updates when services are affected or new restrictions are announced.

If you have any feedback, please get in touch with us by replying to this email or contacting involvement@isha.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you!

Ros Selby, Head of Communication and Involvement

Contacting ISHA

We're sorry if you've been having difficulty contacting us



You've spoken and we've listened – we know that some of you have waited a long time recently to get through to us on the phone and we are very sorry.

We have had problems with our IT and phone systems during the pandemic, and while we have answered 6838 calls since the beginning of lockdown, we know that some of you have been waiting a long time or not got through to us at all.

From next week staff will be back in the office answering the phones instead of taking calls at home, and we hope that this will lead to an improvement in our service.

If you have any problems in future, please [email ISHA](mailto:isha@isha.co.uk) and we will get back to you within one working day.



If your job or income has been affected, ISHA can help with advice and support – call us on 0300 131 7300 or email isha@isha.co.uk

Resident Involvement and Scrutiny at ISHA



Resident involvement at ISHA is an integral part of our commitment to service excellence, and our Resident Scrutiny Programme is an important way to provide you with an opportunity to get involved.

In September ISHA hosted its very first virtual Resident Action Forum, which was focused on resident experience with ISHA during the coronavirus lockdown. The event provided ISHA with insight and resulted in some tangible recommendations for ISHA to implement – including how to stay better connected with residents and how to prepare for any future lockdowns. These recommendations have been taken on board and the Scrutiny Panel has met with the ISHA Board and Leadership Team to ensure that these issues are a high priority for ISHA.

The September forum is the third event that the Resident Scrutiny Programme has hosted, with many more still to come. If you are interested in being part of the Resident Scrutiny Panel, representing your neighbours and working closely with ISHA, please get in touch at scrutiny@isha.co.uk

During the first lockdown, ISHA called hundreds of vulnerable residents, to check if they were okay and make sure they were connected with local services. However we know there are more residents who could benefit from something like this. One area ISHA is looking to improve is our internal database, and we need your help.

If you have changed your information recently (e.g. phone number, email address) please let us know – this ensures we have the right contact information if we need to get in touch. Also, if your household circumstances have changed or if your employment has been affected, please get in touch as soon as possible so we can ensure we are doing everything we can to help.

Warm Homes Discount



Did you know that if you on a low income or get Pension Credit, you could get £140 off your electricity bill under the Government's Warm Home Discount Scheme? **Most energy suppliers take part and open their scheme on 12 October 2020.**

Am I eligible?

There are 2 ways to qualify:

- **Core group** - if you were getting the **Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit** on 5 July 2020 and your name is on the bill you should be **automatically eligible**. You should receive a letter by December telling you how to get the discount and asking you to contact the helpline to confirm your details. [You can find out about Pension Credit and how to apply here.](#)
- **Broader group** - if you're on a low income or get certain benefits you may be eligible for the discount if your supplier is part of the scheme **but will have to apply**. You will need to contact them as soon as the scheme opens as they only help a limited number of customers. You can usually do this via your supplier's website, an app or by phone.

What if I have a pre-payment or pay-as-you-go meter?

If you qualify but have a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter, you will usually get the discount in the form of vouchers that you can use to top-up your meter.

When will I receive the discount?

Your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill by 31 March 2021.

Which suppliers are part of the scheme?

As well as the 'Big 6' (EDF, British Gas, EON, NPower, Scottish Power and SSE) there has been a growth in small energy companies taking part in the scheme. Check with your supplier or [find out more here](#).

For more information contact:

the **Warm Home Discount Helpline** on 0800 731 0214 after 12 October 2020 (Monday - Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm)

SHINE, supported by the Mayor of London, can also help with getting the discount and a range of other advices e.g. energy bills and energy efficiency

0300 555 0195 or [email](#).

EU Settled Status

2020 has been a turbulent year so far, and with so much going on in the world, it's easy to lose track of things. One thing that ISHA values, is its multicultural residents. We house a diverse and community-focused group of people, with representation from across the globe.

One thing which has come to light in recent months, which has been overshadowed by the global coronavirus situation, is the path that the UK is taking on its way out of the EU. This affects our residents in different ways, but one of the more immediately affected groups are our EU residents. In order for these citizens to remain in the UK, the government has introduced the EU settlement scheme, which enables European and Swiss citizens and their families, to live and work in the UK.

We have put together some advice, for our residents from the EU, who are applying for this status.

[You can find out more at the Citizen's Advice Bureau.](#)

What is the EU Settlement Scheme?

The EU Settlement Scheme is a free Scheme which enables EEA and Swiss citizens resident in the UK, and their family members, to obtain the status they will require in order to live and work in the UK after 30 June 2021.

Applicants only need to complete three key steps – prove their identity, show that they live in the UK, and declare any criminal convictions.

How many people have applied?

Up to the end of February 2020, there have been more than 3.34 million applications and internal figures show that more than 3 million have been granted status.

What support is available?

There is a wide range of support available online, over the phone and in person to help people apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.

You can get support applying to the EU Settlement Scheme if you're a vulnerable citizen, for example if you:

- are elderly
- are isolated
- are disabled
- are a child in care
- have significant language or literacy problems
- have mental health issues
- do not have a permanent address
- are the victim of domestic abuse
- are the victim of human trafficking

[Information specific to your location can be found here, by entering your post code online](#)

What impact has Coronavirus had on the EU Settlement Scheme?

In line with the latest Public Health England advice, some of the support services and application routes have temporarily changed. However, individuals can continue to apply using any laptop or mobile device and they can still use the "EU Exit ID Document check app" to complete the identity stage of their application.

While applications continue to be processed, during this challenging time they will take longer than usual. A range of support continues to be available online, by email and telephone for those who have questions or need help applying.

Universal Credit



The coronavirus situation has created several follow-on impacts for all of us. There have been a number of initiatives from government put in place to ensure everyone can be supported during and post the uncertainties. One initiative has been to increase the standard allowances for Universal Credit for one year (automatic) starting in April 2020. There is no need for action if you are already receiving Universal Credit, your allowances will be automatically updated.

Coronavirus - Increase in UC Standard Allowances for All

There will be extra increases in the Universal Credit monthly Standard Allowances (for 1 year only) from April 2020 for clients on UC

- Single under 25 - £342.72(£256.05)
- Single 25 and above - £409.89(£323.22)
- Couple under 25 - £488.59(£401.92)
- Couple 25 and above - £594.04(£507.37)

In Working Tax Credit a similar increase takes place (for 1 year only). Instead of the planned Basic element of £1995 per year, the figure will be £3,040.

Note however, there is no equivalent extra increase in other legacy benefits -IS, JSA(IB), ESA(IR), HB, CTC.

Coronavirus - Sizeable Increases in Local Housing Allowances for HB/UC

Claimants on HB or UC in the private rented sector will see increases in their Local Housing Allowances from April 2020. Most claimants will get more benefit. One exception might be where the client is affected by the Benefit Cap.

If you have any questions about Universal Credit, if you think you're eligible or need assistance with an application, there are services available, such as the [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#), who can help you understand your eligibility. Alternatively please get in touch with us and we can help.