



Regulator of  
Social Housing

# Coronavirus operational response survey results

April 2020 data

7 May 2020



OFFICIAL

## Overview

Coronavirus has profoundly affected the whole of the country and we know that registered providers of social housing have been working hard to continue to deliver important services to keep tenants safe whilst also protecting their staff. We welcome the intensive efforts of providers to support their tenants and recognise that this has involved some very difficult choices for organisations and their staff.

To ensure that we have up-to-date information about how providers are coping with some of the current challenges they face, we have introduced a temporary monthly survey covering key areas on tenant safety. Appendix 1 sets out the survey questions.

We asked private registered providers with 1,000 or more homes, local authority social landlords and those providers with fewer than 1,000 homes which have a high proportion of supported accommodation to respond to the first survey. The response rate was good (93%) and we are grateful to all the providers that responded.

The sector is generally reporting that despite the impact of coronavirus it is still managing to maintain adequate levels of service delivery in the areas surveyed. This includes in care and support settings where providers are reporting maintaining safe staffing levels and essential services. This is testament to the hard work and agility of providers and their staff in prioritising tenant safety at this time.

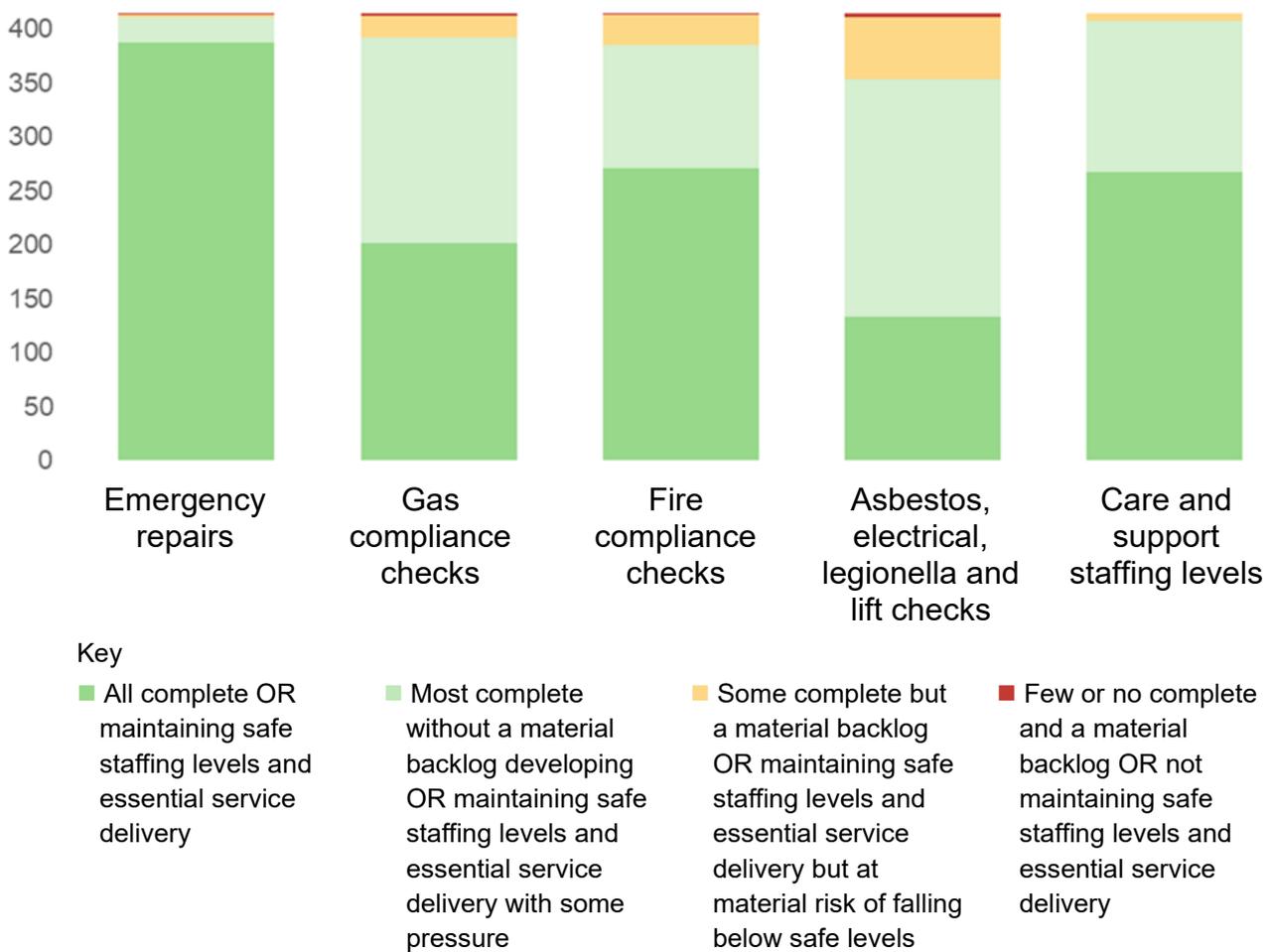
There are common themes to the issues facing many providers, including access to properties, concerns about the availability of PPE, the robustness of the supply chain, and risks to safe staffing levels in accommodation with care and support services. A handful of providers have reported experiencing specific challenges in some areas. Most have found their own solutions, but we have been in touch with a small number to discuss the challenges. In general, providers are reporting that, whilst emergency repairs and critical safety checks are being carried out, backlogs of routine repairs and less critical safety checks are building up.

We will repeat this survey for the period to 15 May; with returns due by 22 May, and will publish our analysis of the responses shortly afterwards. However, if providers believe tenant safety is threatened or viability is under strain, they should not wait for the survey but should speak to their key contact, or our Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries team, via [enquiries@rsh.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@rsh.gov.uk) or 0300 124 5225. Providers with fewer than 1,000 homes should use our dedicated email address [SmallProviders@rsh.gov.uk](mailto:SmallProviders@rsh.gov.uk).

## Results from the April survey

The survey responses are shown below. The survey questions are shown in full in Appendix 1.

### Survey responses



The written responses, from a representative sample of responses, show some common challenges across the sector.

Some providers report that they are finding it difficult to access properties to complete safety checks either because tenants are shielding and unable to let people in, or because tenants have other concerns about contractors entering their homes. There is also concern that tenants may not be reporting emergency repairs because they do not want people entering their homes or because of a misunderstanding about what constitutes an emergency repair.

In some cases, contractors are protecting their own staff by only carrying out emergency work, such as high priority Fire Risk Assessment actions, electrical repairs, or lift maintenance. In other cases, providers and contractors are reporting difficulties obtaining materials, with some of their usual suppliers closed or offering reduced services.

Providers have said that they have enough personal protective equipment (PPE) to meet their short-term needs, but they are worried that this may become a more serious concern in the future, either due to lack of availability or rising prices. In care settings, some providers express concerns about their ability to maintain safe staffing levels where there are outbreaks of coronavirus in the care setting itself. These concerns relate to staff absences caused by both self-isolation requirements and by stress and anxiety.

It was clear from responses that initially there were different interpretations of official guidance and that for a short period before the Health and Safety Executive released its [guidance on 16 April](#), some providers had suspended gas servicing programmes. Survey comments have confirmed that where this was the case, providers are now clear on the [expectations](#) and have resumed servicing programmes in line with those guidelines.

Providers reported several examples of mitigating approaches to manage the challenges of maintaining key services. These included:

- triaging repairs and health and safety checks, and prioritising those which present the greatest risk to tenant safety;
- redeploying staff and resources to high priority actions;
- issuing guidance to tenants;
- expanding definitions of what constitutes emergency repairs;
- redeploying staff to support vulnerable tenants – both in and out of formal care settings;
- identifying new contractors and suppliers of materials, including for PPE;
- partnering with other agencies such as other regulators, voluntary agencies and public services such as Fire Authorities and the NHS to make sure essential services are delivered; and
- enhanced performance reporting.

Many providers also report that they are in contact with more tenants by phone and by text, particularly tenants who are vulnerable. In addition to helping providers manage the challenges they face, we know from our meetings with tenant groups, that tenants are finding these efforts extremely helpful.

The results of this first survey into how providers are maintaining service delivery during the restrictions imposed to control coronavirus demonstrate the huge effort that the sector has made in a short space of time to ensure tenant safety. We will also use the information, at aggregate level, to help inform government's response to the pandemic.

We know that providers will continue to face challenges over the coming weeks and the results of the next survey will give us an opportunity to understand the trends within the sector.

## Appendix 1: About the coronavirus operational response survey and our analysis

The information in this report is based on our initial analysis of registered providers' survey responses. Our full analysis is still in progress.

The survey asks providers to answer a single multiple-choice question on each of five key areas. For each area it also asks them to identify any key constraints, risks and mitigating actions and the scale of any backlog.

### 2. Emergency repairs

- All complete
- Most complete without a material backlog developing
- Some complete but a material backlog
- Few or no complete and a material backlog

### 3. Statutory gas safety checks

- All complete
- Most complete without a material backlog developing
- Some complete but a material backlog
- Few or no complete and a material backlog

### 4. Statutory fire safety checks

- All complete
- Most complete without a material backlog developing
- Some complete but a material backlog
- Few or no complete and a material backlog

### 5. Asbestos, electrical, legionella and lift checks

- All complete
- Most complete without a material backlog developing
- Some complete but a material backlog
- Few or no complete and a material backlog

### 6. Care and support staffing levels.

- Maintaining safe staffing levels and essential service delivery
- Maintaining safe staffing levels and essential service delivery with some pressure
- Maintaining safe staffing levels and essential service delivery but at material risk of falling below safe levels
- Not maintaining safe staffing levels and essential service delivery

The survey is hosted on our data collection portal NROSH+, for all private registered providers with more than 1,000 homes, local authority registered providers and some registered providers with fewer than 1,000 homes to complete. Providers were asked to submit survey responses covering the period up to and including 17 April, by Friday 24 April.

We will open the survey for a second round of responses between Friday 15 May and Friday 22 May.



© RSH copyright 2020

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at: [www.gov.uk/rsh](https://www.gov.uk/rsh)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us via [enquiries@rsh.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@rsh.gov.uk) or call 0300 124 5225.

or write to:

Regulator of Social Housing

1st floor – Lateral

8 City Walk

Leeds LS11 9AT

**RSH regulates private registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs.**