

COVID-19 Impact Monitoring Executive Summary

May 2020

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on our society, economy and personal lives, and the social housing sector is no exception. Social landlords provide a critical front-line service to many of the most vulnerable people in society and have had to rapidly adapt to a crisis that could not have been foreseen only a few months ago. Good data has never been more important. Whether it's about identifying vulnerable tenants to provide better support, or forecasting the impact of arrears and rent lost due to vacant homes, landlords are seeking out the data that will help them make the right decisions now and for the future.

HouseMark is delivering a series of solutions to help landlords quantify the impact of COVID-19, forecast the future and take action. The first step is to assess the impact of COVID-19 on key operational areas. This is the summary of findings of our second impact report and shows data relating to the month of April.

Staffing



18% of the sector workforce were not at work during April

Around one fifth social housing staff were absent from work at the end of April – including those off sick. This represents 27,000 employees sector-wide.

Lettings



Lettings down 77% since March

Creating an estimated backlog of around 45,000 additional vacant homes and a projected end of year void loss position of 2.17%.

Arrears

Median arrears increased further in April to 3.29% compared to 2.99% in March, representing over £100m of additional arrears since lockdown began. Further increases are expected when the government's job retention scheme ends.



Arrears up a further 10% in April

Gas Safety



91.2%
Gas safety certificates in April

Gas safety compliance down to 91.2%

Representing an estimated 380,000 properties UK-wide without a valid gas safety certificate. Expect this shortfall to be prioritised as lockdown eases.

Anti-social behaviour



increase in reports of anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse

Landlords are facing challenges diagnosing and dealing with ASB due to many of the usual channels being unavailable.

However, some landlords are making good use of quick solutions such as injunctions.

Repairs

Backlog of 800,000 non-emergency repairs built up in April. Although reporting and recording of non-emergency repairs is much lower than 'normal times'. With almost a fifth of sector staff not working, social distancing pressure and backlogs in other operational areas compounding the repairs challenge, this is expected to remain a key issue as landlords plan recovery through the autumn.

800,000
non-emergency repairs built up in April