

Consumer Coronavirus (Covid-19) Guidance On Safe Home Moving

A quick guide to moving home during COVID-19: Information for buyers, sellers and renters

To move home during the COVID-19 outbreak you need to know about the ‘new rules’ to make sure

you move safely.

This quick guide to moving home safely during COVID-19 will help you understand what you need to do, and what anyone involved in your move, whether an estate or letting agent, a property lawyer, photographer, energy assessor, a valuer or surveyor, someone helping you organise your mortgage or the removal company who move you, will need to do to provide a safe environment for everyone.

This guidance is aligned with [‘The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy’](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884171/FINAL_6.6637_CO_HMG_C19_Recovery_FINAL_110520_v2_WEB__1_.pdf) and the

[Government advice on home moving during the covid-19 outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=e0e4eeda-953e-4084-b795-adf5e2870cb4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate).
*No guidance can cover every scenario, especially as the current situation is evolving, so please take a pragmatic, common-sense approach to moving home during this time.*

## **General information for different stages of the moving process**

### **Before you move**

Do your really need to meet in person? For the foreseeable future everyone needs to look for easy alternatives to physical meetings wherever possible so use digital technology, telephone contact, email and video-conferencing tools - whatever suits you best.

There will be times when you will need to meet, for example, if you need to have a legal document witnessed and, in all cases, you must protect each other by following current social distancing guidelines.
However, if a meeting is required, wash your hands before and after using soap and water, dry them thoroughly, ideally with paper towels, and abide by the 2m (about 2 large strides) social distancing guidelines.

### **Documents, identity requirements, witnessing and signatures**

When you buy, sell, or let property you will need to prove your identity, often to several different people, for example, your mortgage adviser, property lawyer, estate or letting agent. This can be done using electronic verification systems.

Contracts can be electronically signed though your property lawyer may still post them to you to sign and return. Some legal documents need witnessing and your witness will need to be physically present. If you maintain social distancing and don’t share pens, the risk can be minimised.

### **Precautions that you can expect from any property professional visiting your home**

Where possible, they will:

* + - Use their own transport rather than public transport.
		- Fill up cars at petrol stations using gloves and/or a paper towel.
		- Use hand sanitisers before entering your home and when leaving.
		- Not shake hands with you and maintain the 2m social distance.
		- Use knuckles rather than fingers to touch light switches and other contact points.
		- Declare COVID-19 symptoms and postpone any meetings, adhering to government and public health guidance (PHG) at all times.
		- Ask all present to declare any COVID-19 symptoms and adhere to government PHE guidelines.

Any person selling, buying, occupying, or renting a home, together with everyone else working in the industry, is legally obliged to declare any COVID-19 symptoms immediately during a property visit. Everyone will need to observe [government PHG.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

### **Vulnerable people or those shielding**

If you are in this category, please seek medical advice on whether your move should take place as during this period the government advice is *“staying at home and avoiding unnecessary contacts over this period, if at all possible.”*The also suggest that *“All parties involved in home buying and selling should prioritise agreeing amicable arrangements to change move dates for individuals in this group, or where someone in a chain is in this group.”
Please read the advice for vulnerable people or those shielding in the* [‘Government advice on](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=e0e4eeda-953e-4084-b795-adf5e2870cb4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

[home moving during the covid-19 outbreak’.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=e0e4eeda-953e-4084-b795-adf5e2870cb4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

## **Considerations for your move**

There are three key stages in the property purchase, sale and rental process. The checklists below outline everything you need to know.

### **Checklist to prepare for a property professional to visit your property for sale or let**

When you want to let or sell a property and are arranging visits there is a lot that you can do, together with property professionals, to take sensible precautions and minimise the time people spend in your property.

Property professionals will need to ask a series of questions prior to visiting your property, including:

* + - Has anyone in the home had COVID-19?
		- Has anyone at home displayed COVID-19 symptoms or not yet completed a required period of household self-isolation?
		- Do you or anyone in your family have any COVID-19 symptoms?
		- Is there someone in the property that could be/is in the high-risk category? If so, they should ideally be placed elsewhere. Can a representative be appointed in their place?

The company should also confirm with you that the property professional viewing or visiting

your property hasn’t had any symptoms.

If an agent is not present at a viewing, they will ask all those attending to declare they have no symptoms and keep a record that highlights everyone has understood the need to meet the safety guidelines.

*Beware: If these questions are not asked before visiting your property, you need to consider whether the company is taking your safety seriously.*

To keep contact to a minimum:

* + - No open house viewings should take place.
		- Ideally, only one professional and up to two other adults should attend viewings. Where viewers need to be accompanied by small children they should be kept from touching surfaces.
		- Physical viewings should be limited to members of the same household. eg If a couple wish to view but are currently living in separate households, they should book separate viewings, unless they are in a support bubble . See government guidance https:[//w](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household)w[w.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household)
		- Your property professional is likely to ask whether you can leave the property during viewings, so do advise if this is not possible (Can you go for a walk? Leave your home for food shopping? Be outside?)
		- Where possible, only one property professional will visit the property at a time. Where that is not possible, for example, if two removal people are required, or if you have tradespeople working on the property, professionals should adhere to current social distancing measures if they can. (Please see moving day checklist).
		- Viewings will ideally take place outside of commuting times to avoid rush hour.
		- Anyone coming to assess your home for a valuation, surveys, assessment of energy performance, or for any other purpose, will ask many questions about your property and put direct questions to you prior to the visit, in the interests of minimising time spent in your property, for example:
			* Why are you moving?
			* Is the property occupied? If so, are the occupant’s tenants or homeowners?
			* How many people are currently in the property?
			* Are there any potential risks to the occupants?
			* What is the current and planned future use of the property?
			* Where are the fuse box, gas meter, water meter, stop cock, boiler, water storage tank, broadband connection located?
			* Have you got copies of any electrical, gas safety or other guarantees/warranties for windows, boilers, historical damp treatment paperwork, planning documents for extensions, etc?
			* Has the property been subject to any subsidence? If so, what was the cause and has the problem been solved?

Please have answers to the above questions ready when you speak to your property professional

### **15-minute viewing and visits**

Where possible, and depending on the size of the property, agents and viewers will be asked to minimise time inside the property.
This won’t be possible, however, for property assessments such as energy performance, for

preparing marketing materials, and surveys or removals.

Check carefully any terms and conditions so you know whether:

* There are restrictions and limitations of the service that can be offered due to precautions taken during COVID-19.
* The service may take longer than before due to the precautions taken. This is likely, so please be patient and understanding.

### **Keys**

When handing over keys to an agent, surveyor or other property professional, ensure they are sanitised by using hand sanitisers or passed via a disinfection wipe.

### **Home viewings, property visits and assessments checklist**

When a property is being viewed or assessed by a property professional, they will minimise the time spent in your property.

When booking a visit or viewing, a property professional should ask a series of questions prior to visiting your property, including:

* Has anyone in the home had COVID-19?
* Has anyone at home displayed COVID-19 symptoms or not yet completed a required period of household self-isolation?
* Do you or anyone in your family have any COVID-19 symptoms?
* Is there someone in the property that could be/is in the high-risk category? If so, they should ideally not be present in the property. Can a representative be appointed in their place?

The company should also confirm with you that the property professional viewing or visiting

your property, or any viewers, haven’t had any symptoms.

*Beware: If these questions are not asked before visiting your property, you need to consider whether the company is taking your safety seriously.*

When preparing your property for viewings, valuations and surveys, please protect everyone by:

1. Keeping windows and internal doors open wherever possible.
2. Wiping down door handles/handrails/lift controls or other ‘touch points’, especially in

the kitchen and bathroom.

1. Opening a loft hatch and setting up a loft ladder.
2. Turning the room lights on.
3. If possible, leave the property during the visit/inspection; for example, stay outside, or if it is not possible to leave the property, remain in one room. Otherwise, only have one adult present. Ideally wash hands before and after someone has visited and keep to social distancing measures at all times.
4. Ensuring pets and children are not in the property, or stay in one room and move to another room when the visitor needs to see the room they are in.
5. Restrict access to w/c or wash facilities unless the property professional(s) is/are there for a long time. If used, please disinfect after use.
6. Sanitising any keys handed to an agent, surveyor or other property professional using hand sanitisers, or passing via a disinfectant wipe.
7. Clean door hands before and after each visit.
8. Some more vulnerable visitors and occupants may ask people present to wear non- surgical face coverings. *Please read the advice for vulnerable people or those shielding in the* [‘Government advice on home moving during the covid-19 outbreak’](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=e0e4eeda-953e-4084-b795-adf5e2870cb4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

After the visit, don’t forget to wipe down any door handles and other ‘touch points’ with a

disinfectant.

### **If you are viewing a property:**

1. Before arranging a physical viewing of a property, consider viewing virtually first to minimise the number of visits you need to make.
2. Note that viewings should ideally take place outside commuting hours and avoid using public transport wherever possible.
3. The agent is likely to turn up 10 minutes before any viewings to ensure the property is prepared for viewings
4. Viewers are asked to wash hands ideally using a hand sanitiser prior to entering and leaving a property
5. Only one professional and up to two other adults should attend viewings, where viewers need to be accompanied by small children they should be kept from touching surfaces.
6. Ideally, only one professional and up to two other adults should attend viewings. Where viewers need to be accompanied by small children they should be kept from touching surfaces.
7. Physical viewings should be limited to members of the same household. eg If a couple wish to view but are currently living in separate households, they should book separate viewings, unless they are in a [support bubble.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household)
8. Ideally the agent will show you around the property, but if this is not possible, please adhere to the 2m social distancing rule and wash hands or use a hand sanitiser before and after your visit.
9. Avoid touching surfaces. If you have them use gloves and disinfectant wipes.
10. Some more vulnerable visitors and occupants may ask people present to wear non- surgical face coverings.
11. Any feedback on the property should ideally be discussed outside or after the visit.

Please be patient; it may take longer to secure a viewing due to staff being furloughed or more property visits having to be accompanied by the agent. All of these measures are in place to keep everyone as safe as possible.

### **15-minute viewing and visits**

Where possible, and depending on the size of the property, agents and viewers will be asked to minimise time inside the property.

This won’t be possible, however, for property assessments such as energy performance, for preparing marketing materials, and surveys or removals.

Good time keeping is essential, and communication if running late. Agents should allow a longer time-window for a 15-minute viewing to allow for preparation, delays, and closing up.

### **Mortgage valuations, home surveys and energy assessments**

Most mortgage valuations and all home survey inspections and energy assessments will require surveyors to inspect your property in person. Surveyors will minimise time spent at the property, however depending on the service and your requirements, they may need to spend a longer time inspecting different parts of the property.

### **Checklist for moving day during COVID-19**

You can reduce moving day stress by preparing beforehand.

Some removal services would normally offer packing services but these will be limited for now. However, boxes and packing equipment can still be supplied.

A [‘deep clean’](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) is recommended when moving in and out of a property, so it’s a good idea to agree with your property lawyer whether you need to do a deep clean on your own home when it is empty, and also whether you need to do this in your new home before you move in.

### **Vulnerable people or those shielding**

If you are in this category, please seek medical advice on whether your move should take place as during this period the government advice is *“staying at home and avoiding unnecessary contacts over this period, if at all possible.”*

The also suggest that *“All parties involved in home buying and selling should prioritise agreeing amicable arrangements to change move dates for individuals in this group, or where someone in a chain is in this group.”*

*Please read the advice for vulnerable people or those shielding in the* [‘Government advice on](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=e0e4eeda-953e-4084-b795-adf5e2870cb4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) [home moving during the covid-19 outbreak’.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=e0e4eeda-953e-4084-b795-adf5e2870cb4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

### **Before moving day:**

1. If you need to send money to your property lawyer check whether your bank account has any limit on the amount you can send via your online banking. If you arrange the payments in advance you can avoid a visit to your bank. Be alert to fraudsters – they look for signs you might be sending money so avoid posting on social media that you are moving and be especially suspicious if you receive communication that suggests your property lawyer has changed their bank details.
2. Self-pack miscellaneous and non-breakable items wherever possible (ask your removal company what boxes and other materials they will supply and to itemise any associated costs).
3. Where possible, please clean your belongings, with standard domestic cleaning products before they are handled by others, including removal firms.
4. Packing by the remover is currently limited to china, glass and breakable items.
5. Dismantle for packing, and then re-assemble at the destination, furniture items in your new home wherever possible.
6. Co-ordinate your move with anyone living in the property so they will have time to move out before you or your removers arrive at the property. Check if there is an agreed time for the property to become vacant on the day of the move, for example 2pm.
7. If it is possible, allow 72 hours between a householder moving out and a new one moving in. This may be more likely to be possible when renting.

*Try to have everything packed and ready the night before your move.*

### **On moving day, before the removers arrive:**

1. Where possible, if you haven’t already, please [clean your belongings,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) with standard domestic cleaning products before they are handled by others, including removal firms
2. Ideally leave the property while the removers are working, either by staying outside, or keeping yourself to one room. Always observe the two metre social distancing

measures. If you have access to disposable gloves, sanitising gels and possibly masks, please use them.

1. Clean down hard surfaces with warm soapy water, then disinfect these surfaces with household disinfectant.
2. Wipe down door handles/handrails/lift controls and other ‘touch points’ with household

disinfectant (check first that it won’t damage the surfaces).

1. Clean and wash toilet facilities as above.
2. Keep windows open to allow ventilation.
3. Have one designated bathroom, if possible, just for the crew to use. Place soap and hand-sanitiser within easy reach. Clean and wash the area as noted above.
4. Open a loft hatch or set up a loft ladder.
5. Ensure pets and children are not in the property or keep them in the same room with you.
6. Wash your hands regularly, use paper towels to dry them and/or your own hand sanitiser

Remember - any keys handed over need to be sanitised by using hand sanitisers, or via disinfectant wipes.

Note that it will not be possible for crew members to keep a 2m distance during your move from each other, but you should keep a 2m social distance from them.

If you are someone in the chain is asked to self-isolate during the moving process, please refer to additional information in this document.

Additional home moving guidance for people becoming ill or needing to isolate during the moving process, including moving day

There is already comprehensive guidance from government, the industry, individual sector and consumer guidance for those involved in moving home:-

### **Government guidance:-**

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak) [19-outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

### **Industry guidance:-**

<https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/downloads/20200513>

To help communicate the ‘new way’ to move home to buyers, sellers and tenants, the consumer

guides below will also be helpful:-

Preparing for a property professional to visit your property for sale or let during COVID-19 - [https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/prepare-property-professional-visit-your-property-](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/prepare-property-professional-visit-your-property-sale) [sale](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/prepare-property-professional-visit-your-property-sale)

Home viewings, property visits and assessments during COVID-19 [https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/home-viewings-property-visits-and-assessments-](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/home-viewings-property-visits-and-assessments-checklist) [checklist](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/home-viewings-property-visits-and-assessments-checklist)

Checklist for moving day during COVID-19 - [https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-moving-day-during-covid19) [moving-day-during-covid19](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-moving-day-during-covid19)

### **But what happens if someone develops symptoms or Covid-19 during a house move or is asked to self-isolate?**

This additional guidance covers what consumers and the industry should do if someone:

* Becomes ill with Covid-19 symptoms
* Is diagnosed with Covid-19
* Is alerted by the NHS’s test and trace system that they have been in contact with someone that has Covid-19 symptoms and they need to self-isolate

*When and if available, and to reduce the impact of any spread of the virus during home moving it would be worthwhile for home movers and those within the industry, be they buying or letting, to sign up to the NHS track and trace app when it becomes available.*

If anyone is asked to self-isolate during the moving process, please ensure they follow government guidance:-

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) [guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection)

If you have any symptoms or are contacted by the NHS test and trace system, here is the information on what to do: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

### **What if someone has symptoms/becomes ill during offer to exchange?**

If someone becomes ill during these stages, it is possible to continue with the home buying and selling process up to the point of people visiting the home eg for a valuation or the physical move. The move should not take place unless everyone in the chain is free of the symptoms and Covid-19 itself. If contracts have not been exchanged it is still possible to withdraw from the transaction.

### **What if someone has symptoms between exchange and completion or accepting an offer on a property let**

If someone becomes ill during this time, the property lawyers will need to negotiate organising the physical move when everyone in the chain is free of the symptoms and Covid-19 itself.

If it is not possible to postpone the move for any reason, the person with Covid-19 and anyone that is self-isolating with them will need to be out of the property before move (completion) day and not enter the new property until everyone else has gone eg removal people and other occupants.

If the property is a shared home or House in Multiple Occupation, see below and read this article: [https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/how-do-you-let-and-rent-house-multiple-occupation-](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/how-do-you-let-and-rent-house-multiple-occupation-hmo) [hmo](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/how-do-you-let-and-rent-house-multiple-occupation-hmo)

The property the person is leaving will have to be deep cleaned by someone who is not self-isolating and is free of Covid-19 prior to anyone entering it eg removals team and post leaving the property. For more information on deep cleaning and what to do on move day, read <https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-moving-day-during-covid19>

For anyone suffering with or having Covid-19 symptoms who cannot postpone their move, face masks will need to be used on move day.

### **Moving day**

It is recommended that a supply of face coverings is available for everyone on moving day, just in case any symptoms are developed during the day.

If someone develops symptoms on move day, ideally the move should be delayed if at all possible, please follow the latest self-isolation rules [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) [stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) [infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection)

Anyone that develops symptoms on the day whether they are buying/selling or letting, and the move can’t be postponed, will need to stay away from everyone on the move day. For example, if one person in the household has had to isolate and there is someone that can manage the move

that doesn’t have symptoms, they can go ahead, but with the precautions, if they have symptoms,

they need to take the precautions too.

This person needs to wear a mask and keep at least 2m social distancing from anyone they meet.

However, if you are moving yourselves, you can continue to pack if you are all well enough, but you will need to do a deep clean of the property as soon as you have emptied it.

Read the following for more information:- [https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-moving-day-during-covid19) [moving-day-during-covid19](https://www.propertychecklists.co.uk/articles/checklist-moving-day-during-covid19) .

You will need to alert your property lawyer and agent as soon as you are aware you have symptoms so that they can advise the other parties.

When travelling to your new home, you will need to remain within the car on the journey and ensure the agent drops off the keys to the property you are moving into, rather than picking them up from the agent or the previous homeowner/tenant.

Additional home moving information for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

### **What if the property is a House in Multiple Occupation?**

If the property is an HMO, the person with Covid-19 will ideally need to delay the move in, or as a minimum stay in their room and self-isolate according to the guidance: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) [guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection)

The property will need to be deep cleaned once they have moved in and the tenants should:-

1. Agree a time to use the communal areas eg the kitchen and bathroom
2. Clean shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms, take meals in the room
3. Regularly clean other shared spaces including living rooms (including all surfaces)
4. Keep shared spaces well ventilated eg opening windows and doors
5. Don’t share tea towels and other towels
6. Use separate crockery and eating and drinking utensils
7. Keep 2 metres away from others, whether inside or outside
8. Ideally the tenant should secure a Covid-19 test if possible.