

29th September 2020



CLARION
HOUSING GROUP

Ms Suzanne Muna
Social Housing Action Campaign

Clarion Group

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Dear Ms Muna,

Thank you for your letter. I hope you are keeping well. The last eight months have been an incredibly challenging time for all in society and have shone a light on the valuable safety net that social housing provides. It is vital that we protect our rental income as far as possible if we are to continue to be able to deliver on our mission to provide good quality and affordable housing for those failed by the market.

That being said, during these unprecedented times you are absolutely correct that Clarion has tolerated greater rent and service charge arrear levels. Eviction is always a last resort, even in normal circumstances, and for residents who were managing their account before the pandemic and have since fallen into arrears, Clarion has taken the decision not to pursue formal possession proceedings. Our priority throughout the pandemic has been to engage and support our residents experiencing financial hardship. Housing costs are covered, for those who are eligible, through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and Clarion has an in-house team of welfare benefits advisers who have been working with residents to help them secure the help available to them. Clarion's tenancy sustainment team also works closely with key partners to offer further tailored support for residents where needed.

The jobs and training service delivered by the Group's charitable foundation, Clarion Futures, has continued to offer this important service through the pandemic, helping residents navigate the world of online training and virtual job interviews. In addition we have established an Emergency Support Fund for our community-based partners, such as mobile foodbanks, and we continue to make around 6,000 welfare calls to our residents over 70 years old or those we know are clinically vulnerable to check they have the help they need.

Housing associations such as Clarion are uniquely placed to provide this support and we have seen that during the pandemic, it has largely been a benefit to be a housing association resident. This has underlined why it is so important for us to safeguard our resources to enable us to continue to do this very important work.

I hope my response has been helpful in understanding Clarion's approach to providing the best support for its residents during the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

David Avery
Group Chair, Clarion Housing Group