



Is my move in still going ahead?

At present we are continuing with moves where possible, and where DIO have received confirmation from Career Managers that the move is essential. We rely on service users to inform us if your move is essential, and to ensure that DIO have received the relevant confirmation from your Career Manager. Please contact the operative who sent you your service manual to discuss or email resident.enquiry@mearsgroup.co.uk .

As some agents are shut we are coming up with solutions to get keys for properties. Our operatives on the ground are normally able to pick keys up and arrange for a handover without any human contact. Our operatives will contact you to discuss specific arrangements, which will vary according to the property.

I had a move that has now been postponed. How long do I have to wait?

MOD have put all non-essential moves on hold until 1st July 2020. A review will take place on 30th April 2020 to determine if this period should be extended. At Mears we are making preparations for moves to recommence and we are working with DIO to request updated lists of applicants and required dates from Units. We expect that there will be a significant level of demand for the service as soon as we are able to facilitate moves again, which is expected to coincide with the busiest time of year for moves in normal circumstances. The private rental market has largely shut down during the lockdown and we expect it to be a very competitive market when house moves are permitted to recommence. As such it would help us enormously to have as much forward notice of intended moves as possible. We may also seek to understand if Units are prepared to take on properties early to help us manage the peak in demand and ensure we meet as many Required By Dates as possible.

Why am I not able to do a proper March In / Out?

In line with the Government's Social Distancing guidance, and to keep service users and operatives as safe as possible, we have implemented a modified approach to March Ins and March Outs. Our operatives will now normally conduct the inventory independently, taking pictures as a record to support us with assessment of dilapidations. They will then normally exit the building before conducting a safe, socially distanced handover of keys. Service users have 14 days after move in to report any issues to us through the 14 day observation form.

In some exceptional circumstances we may be unable to complete an inventory due to issues outside of our control. In these instances our operatives will liaise with you, with Landlords / Lettings Agents and with the DIO to agree an alternative approach.

Why have you asked me to move into a property that is in poor condition / unclean / not fully furnished?

Following the current Government restrictions on non-essential travel, many of the cleaning companies, repairs and maintenance contractors and furniture suppliers we normally use are either not operating or only responding to emergency jobs. This has significantly restricted our ability to get properties up to the usual high standard before you move in. We apologise for the inconvenience this will cause and your Relocation Coordinator will work with you to explore options for getting your property into as good a state as possible in the current circumstances.

Why have you cancelled my move in?

Where we are advised that a move is not essential we may reallocate properties to those moves that have been deemed essential. Where we have been unable to get keys due to agents and landlords being unavailable we may cancel an appointment until we can find a solution or a suitable alternative, but if your move has been deemed essential we are still working hard to allocate you a property.

Is my move out still going ahead?

We're primarily only coordinating move outs for those people whose moves have been deemed essential, however we may still have to go ahead with your move if we have already handed in notice and occupants moving in have their moves deemed essential. In those cases Mears will work with you and DIO to find a solution before proceeding with the move. Please email moveout.enquiry@mearsgroup.co.uk to discuss your move out.

If I cancel my move out do you still require 40 days' notice?

Yes. We will rescind notice to Landlords in most instances and the terms of our contract require 40 days' notice.

What happens if I am told to cancel my move out due to all Postings and Assignments being cancelled until July?

Please let Mears know as soon as possible so we can work with the Landlord to try to accommodate this. In most cases we have been able to rescind notice and keep occupants in the same property. Where that is not possible we will work with you and DIO to find a solution.

I have been told to work from home so have moved out. What happens now?

If you are working from home and you were due to move out of your property we will work with you and the Landlord to find the best solution for your circumstances. It may be that we can retain your property until you are able to move out, or alternatively that Mears can move your belongings into storage. In all circumstances we will do our utmost to avoid human contact wherever possible during the lockdown period.

What do I do if I am not going to be in the property for the foreseeable future?

In line with your License To Occupy, you must inform Mears if you are going to be away from the property for more than 14 days. Please email us at resident.enquiry@mearsgroup.co.uk. Mears will confirm receipt of your notification once we have processed it.

Where a property is going to be empty for more than 2 weeks Mears must either conduct Vacant Property Checks or inform the Landlord of the absence as such an absence could invalidate the Landlord's Insurance.

If you do not inform Mears that you are away from the property and damage is incurred due to, or worsened because of, your absence, you may be liable for the cost of such damage.

Please inform us when you are due to return to the property using the same email address so we can cancel any pre-booked property checks.

What are Vacant Property Checks?

Mears has an obligation to visit vacant properties to ensure they remain safe and secure. These are called Vacant Property Checks, and consist of a visual inspection to identify any hazards or issues that may invalidate a Landlord's Home Insurance policy. Depending on the circumstances we may turn off water at the stopcock to minimise the risk of leaks or flooding in your absence. Mears will compile a report, details of which include whether the heating is on/working during Winter months, any alarm set and operational etc. A copy of the 1st VPC report will be sent to the occupant and Mears will inform occupants of the frequency of ongoing visits. The details of the report would be shared with a third party in the event of any claim against Mears for breach of tenancy. Vacant Property Checks do not include checks of occupants' personal belongings, which remain the responsibility of the occupant.

How will Mears gain access to the property for Vacant Property Checks?

In the 1st instance Mears will ask if you have left your keys with anyone, and if not we will ascertain whether the Letting Agent / Landlord holds keys for the property. If we are able to locate keys we will use these to gain access to the property. If we are unable to locate keys we will inform the Landlord and ask them to notify their insurance company.

Why are we still allowing Move in's and Move out's when we are being told that this is not essential?

At present we are only continuing with moves where they are deemed essential or where we have been unable to rescind notice, but have found an alternative solution. The vast majority of landlords are working with us to help people remain in properties. Mears do not have the authority to deem a move 'non-essential' and we rely on the advice of service personnel and their Career Managers, via DIO.

Why are you still coordinating Gas safety inspections?

The HSE has advised that gas safety inspections should go ahead as far as possible so as not put people at undue risk. They have also announced that gas safety inspections can be carried out up to 3 months earlier than required and that the certificate would then be valid for 12 months from the point at which the current certificate expires. The HSE has advised that there is an understanding that some gas safety certificates may expire due to an inability to access properties due to COVID-19, and where we can demonstrate that we made all possible effort to access a property to conduct gas safety inspections our Landlords will not be held accountable for a delay in securing access due to the current circumstances.

When we are coordinating gas safety inspections we will take all reasonable care to avoid the spread of the disease. We are checking that nobody at the property is self-isolating when we contact you to schedule the visit and we are asking operatives attending your property to follow hygiene rules and respect the social distancing guidance wherever possible. Please see the question below about the health of those attending properties.

What do I do about maintenance issues that arise during lockdown?

Please continue to report any repair or maintenance issues that you find in your Substitute Accommodation property. You can do so by emailing us at repair.enquiry@mearsgroup.co.uk. We continue to report repairs to the managing agent or Landlord, however any work that is not deemed urgent or critical is unlikely to have action taken on it until lockdown has been relaxed. At that time agents and contractors will be dealing with a large backlog of work meaning there will be further delays on getting work completed so thank you in advance for your understanding while we try to arrange repairs for you.

Can Mears offer any assurances about the health of those attending properties?

We fully understand the concerns of Service Personnel at this difficult time and the steps set out below are aimed at protecting the health and safety of Service Personnel, their families, and Landlord and Agent Contractors. All works will be undertaken in accordance with Government guidelines, which include:

- Confirming in advance whether anyone in the property is self-isolating or social distancing.
- Remaining more than 2m from other people wherever possible.
- Requesting occupants move to another room/area while work is carried out.
- Cleaning tools and equipment afterwards using sanitisation spray or wipes.
- Washing hands for 20+ seconds using soap & warm water at the nearest available hand wash basin on arrival and before departure.
- Using anti-bacterial hand gel where there are no washing facilities.