

SERVICE CHARGES EXPLAINED

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL INFORMATION

What are service charges?

A service charge is your contribution towards the cost of the services Hounslow Homes provide on your property/estate, this differs from your rent.

- Rent reflects all charges associated with the occupation of the building, which includes repairs, maintenance and general housing management.
- Service charges are for additional services, not provided to every tenant often connected with communal facilities.

It does not mention a service charge in my tenancy agreement.

Your tenancy agreement provides for the collection of rent and any other charges associated with your property. Many residents already pay service charges for district heating or central heating maintenance and servicing.

Why do I have to start paying this now?

Due to a reduction in Government subsidy, we have had to introduce service charges to maintain our services to residents. If we did not collect service charges these services would be cut or reduced. The recent consultation exercise we ran in Hounslow Homes News, told us that tenants prefer a combination of charges and cuts. Most other London local authority tenants already pay service charges on top of their rent.

What is included in my service charge?

The charges will cover services such as caretaking, concierge and neighbourhood warden services, grounds maintenance in communal areas, communal electricity and digital TV aerials.

MAKING PAYMENTS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

When will the charges begin?

Charges for communal electricity and grounds maintenance will apply from 7 April 2008 and charges for neighbourhood wardens, concierge and caretaking will apply from 6 April 2009. Charges for digital aerials apply from the date of installation.

How do you work out what my charge is?

Charges are calculated using a formula based on true cost of the service and the number of properties receiving the service. The charge is adjusted to take into account the size of the your property (i.e. number of bedrooms) and the service/s you receive.

How were these services paid for before the 7 April 2008?

Previously these services have been paid for using money paid to the Council by the Government. This is no longer possible as the Government have reduced the subsidy paid to Hounslow.

Will the amount I pay be capped so that I never have to pay more than a certain amount?

Your annual increase cannot be more than inflation (currently estimated at 3.9%) plus 0.5% plus £2 per week.

Why is my neighbour paying less/more than me?

There are two possible reasons for this:

1. Your neighbour may be a leaseholder rather than a tenant. In this circumstance the charges will vary because legislation does not allow a flat-rate charge to be applied to leaseholders.
2. Your neighbour lives in a property with more / less bedrooms. Although the basis of the service charge is a flat rate for all tenancies, the charge is adjusted according to the number of bedrooms in your property.

I cannot afford this additional charge what should I do?

All of the additional charges are eligible for housing benefit. If you are already on full or partial benefit then the benefit will automatically be amended to cover the additional charges. If you are not on housing benefit the additional charges may make you eligible. Please contact the Welfare Benefits on 020 8583 5016 to see if this applies to you.

If you are still not eligible for housing benefit then support services are available by contacting Hounslow Welfare Benefits and Money Advice Unit Helpline on 020 8583 5016.

I do not believe I am receiving a decent service for the amount I am paying, what should I do?

If your service is not up to standard you should use the established complaints process, which allows us to ensure that the problem is thoroughly investigated and dealt with.

For more information or to download a copy of our complaints leaflet and forms visit, http://www.hounslowhomes.org.uk/complaints_hhomes-2.pdf or contact the Complaints Team on 020 8583 3737.

If you would like to pay your rent and service charges by Direct Debit or Standing Order or have any other rent payment queries contact the Housing Income Section on 020 8583 3806, or write to Income Section, Hounslow Homes, St Catherine's House, 2 Hanworth Road, Feltham, Middlesex TW13 5AB.

TRANSLATIONS

If you require a copy of the Service charges explained - Frequently Asked Questions leaflet in another language or format please contact 020 8583 2299 or minicom 020 8583 3122.

Nese keni nevojë për kopjen e fletushkes të Cmimeve për shërbime të spjeguar (Service charges explained) - Pyetjet e shpeshta (Frequently Asked Questions) në gjuhën shqipe ose në ndonjë format tjetër ju lutemi kontaktoni 020 8583 2299 ose minikom 020 8583 3122.

إذا زيايت بالمعصول على شرح وافي لتكاليف الخدمة - بطور الإسئلة المتكررة بالغة العربية أو بشكل آخر الرجاء الاتصال 020 8583 2299 أو على المينيكوم 020 8583 3122

آگر شما کاپی برگه توضیحات هزینه خدمات (سرویس چارجز) و یا برگه سوالات متکرر در این مورد را به زبان فارسی و یا شکل دیگری میخواهید لطفاً به شماره تلفن 020 8583 2299 و یا شماره مینی کام 020 8583 3122 در تماس شوید.

آگر شما نیاز به کپی برگه توضیحات هزینه خدمات (سرویس چارجز) و یا برگه سوالات متکرر در این مورد را به زبان فارسی و یا شکل دیگری میخواهید لطفاً به شماره تلفن 020 8583 2299 و یا شماره مینی کام 020 8583 3122 در تماس شوید.

Haddii aad u baahantahay nuqul ama koobi ee Kharajka Adeega lagu macneeyay-liifletka Su'aalaha Badanaa la Isweydiyo oo ku qoran af Soomaali ama u qoran hab kale fadlan la soo xiriiir 20 8583 2299 ama minicom 020 8583 3122.

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