



# About your service charge.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How will these changes affect my service charge?

This depends on the services covered by your current charges and how your charges have been calculated until now. For most customers, the changes will have little impact, but for others it may mean that charges reduce or increase. If we have not already been in contact, then we will be in touch very soon if your service charges are planned to change significantly in April 2021.

### What services are included in the charges?

All of the services we charge for in accordance with National Housing Federation guidelines are listed at the end of this document. However, not all of the services are provided where you live and these services will not be included in your charges.

### When will I know the cost of my new service charge?

You will receive a clear and itemised service charge breakdown by March 2021 before the new charges are introduced in April 2021. Service charges for Fair Rent tenants will be issued on the review date every 2 years, as usual.

### How will the new charges be calculated?

Your service charges will be calculated annually based on the cost of services. The charges will be shared equally between all customers who receive the services.

### What if I can't afford the changes to my service charges?

For the few customers who will see a significant change to their service charge and are worried, we encourage you to contact our Financial Inclusion team on [financialinclusionteam@onward.co.uk](mailto:financialinclusionteam@onward.co.uk) or call us on 0300 555 0600. We can offer support to help with your finances or support in helping you find employment, so please get in touch.

### How do you know if customers are happy with the services?

We regularly seek feedback from customers about our services. For example, our latest customer satisfaction survey told us that customers are not particularly happy with our gardening, cleaning and window cleaning services. Following this feedback, we carried out a more detailed survey to hear what customers really want from these services. The results of the survey helped us to develop new service standards.

To achieve these new standards, we will appoint new gardening contractors in January 2021 and new cleaning and window cleaning contractors during the second half of 2021. We will closely monitor the performance of our new contractor's and we welcome your feedback.

## Utility and scheme charges

### Communal electricity

This is the cost of providing electricity in communal areas. Depending on your scheme this may include internal and external lighting, power source for lifts, fire alarms or door entry systems.

### Communal gas

This is the cost of providing heating in the communal areas at some of our schemes, most commonly for our sheltered and supported housing customers.

### Communal water

This is the cost of communal water supplies, including standing charges

### Council Tax

This is the cost of Council Tax for offices within sheltered and supported accommodation.

### Scheme Manager

This includes salary and cover costs, mobile response provided by specialist agency (where applicable) and all other costs associated with the provision of a Scheme Manager.

### Telephone line rental

This is the cost of the pay phone or phone line rental costs within the scheme.

### Intensive housing management

This is the cost of providing additional support to supported housing customers.

### Partner agent charge

This charge is applied when a third party agent provides additional services to supported housing customers.

## Upkeep of communal areas

### Communal cleaning

This includes things like rubbish removal, skip/equipment hire, cleaning septic tanks and wheelie bins. It can also cover providing a cleaning service to communal areas which may include the cost of an external contractor, salary costs if the service is being provided by a member of staff, as well as the cost of cleaning materials and equipment.

### Estate management

This charge is applied when a third party agent provides estate services

### Grounds maintenance

This is the cost of providing a grounds maintenance service to communal areas. This may include grass cutting, tree maintenance, grit spreading and litter removal.

### Pest control

This charge is applied where a pest control contract is in place

### Window cleaning

This is the cost of a window cleaning service provided by an external contractor.

## Health & safety testing

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This is the cost of periodic risk assessments and testing, including fire risk assessments, water safety testing, portable appliance testing and lightening conductors

## Provisions

### Provision of external communal areas

This is the cost to maintain, repair and replace items within communal areas. This could include grit bins, garden equipment, play areas, external lighting and car parks.

### Provision of fire safety equipment

This is the cost to maintain, repair and replace fire fighting equipment, fire detection and emergency lighting.

### Provision of lift

This is the cost to maintain, repair and replace passenger lifts.

### Provision of communal equipment

This is the cost to maintain, repair and replace equipment in communal areas and can include CCTV, TV aerials, laundry, security alarms, door entry, security gates and communal aids and adaptations .

### Provision of communal furnishings and individual items

This is the cost to maintain, repair and replace communal furnishings and individual items. Communal furnishings can include furniture, floor coverings, carpets and decorating. Individual items can include white goods and lifeline equipment.

### Provision of specialist equipment

This is the cost to maintain, repair and replace individual aids and adaptations including lifting equipment and hoists.

## Individual services

(these are unlikely to be covered by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit)

### Furniture

Provision of furniture within individual tenancies

### Luncheon club

Provision of meals

### Personal electricity

Individual electricity supply

### Personal gas

Individual gas supply

### Personal water rates

Individual water supply

### Personal support charge

This is the cost for monitoring and maintaining lifeline alarm systems including mobile warden response.

### TV licence

This charge covers the cost of the communal lounge TV licence.

## Management charges

### Management charges

This covers the management cost and overheads of services at your scheme.