



About your service charge.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a service charge?

Your service charge covers the cost of services provided to your scheme, neighbourhood and personal charges in relation to your home.

How is my charge calculated?

The charge is calculated annually based on the cost of services for the previous year and estimated costs for the coming year. Charges are shared equally between all of the customers who benefit from the services.

What items are chargeable?

All of the services we charge for are listed below with an explanation of what they cover. However, not all of the services listed are provided where you live and these services will not be included in your charge.

I claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Will it cover all of my service charge?

Not all services are eligible for Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, which may mean you will have to pay for a shortfall. Please contact your benefits provider to check whether all services are covered. If you're still unsure, please contact our Financial Inclusion team on financialinclusionteam@onward.co.uk or 0300 555 0600.

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

For the few customers who see a significant change to their service charge and are worried, we encourage you to contact our Financial Inclusion team. 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 they pay for?

We regularly seek feedback from customers about our services. For example, our latest customer satisfaction survey told us that customers were 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 have helped us to develop new service standards, and in January 2021 we appointed new gardening contractors. During the first half of 2022 we will also appoint new cleaning and window cleaning contractors. We will closely monitor the performance of our new contractors 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/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

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This covers the cost of running services, managing and setting up contracts, staff, administration and overheads, including the cost of preparing service charge information.