



About your service charge.

From 1st April 2023, some customers will see an increase in their service charges. Over the past year, energy costs have risen significantly and households across the UK have seen their bills increase dramatically. Over the winter, Onward has subsidised energy increases for customers who pay their energy through Onward, meaning that these customers have not had to pay higher energy bills throughout the winter.

Like all housing associations and businesses, Onward is facing rising costs on a number of fronts and unfortunately we cannot continue to subsidise energy for customers indefinitely. So from April 2023, customers will see an increase in their service charges that reflects the current cost of energy. We will continue to protect customers from higher energy bills until April 2023. In addition, for the next financial year, we will not be applying management fees to the increase in utility costs.

Increases to service charges will vary across different schemes depending on the services that are provided. We will apply a service charge cap for our general let and housing for older people customers to protect those facing the potential for highest charges.

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. Service charges cover things like communal utilities (i.e., gas, electricity and water) and scheme managers.

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 customers living in the same building who benefit from the services, so you only pay for the services you get.

What items are chargeable?

Every type of service we can charge via service charges are listed below, with an explanation of what they cover. Not all of the services listed are necessarily provided where you live, so where you do not receive a service, it will not be included in your charge. You will only pay for the services you are provided with.

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 those 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.

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

Upkeep of communal areas

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