



## Your service 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.

### How is my charge calculated?

The charge is calculated annually based on the cost of services you receive for the previous year and estimated costs for the coming year.

### What items are chargeable?

Every type of service we can charge via service charges are listed in the table at the end of this document, 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.

### Why have my service charges changed?

We always work to ensure the best value for money for customers through competitive tender processes for all suppliers. However, the economy has been challenging in recent years and as a result we continue to see increases in the costs of delivering essential services, such as building safety and compliance.

We have brought some services inhouse, such as grounds maintenance, cleaning and waste management, which means that we can better control costs than if we had continued to use external contractors. We have also reviewed data to capture the full and accurate costs of delivering services, which means some customers may see changes in their service charges.

If you have any concerns about your service charges or questions please get in touch.

## Why does my neighbour pay a different amount to me?

You only pay for the services that are provided directly to your house or in the building and/or area that you live.

There may be rare circumstances where a neighbour pays a different amount. An example of this might be where you pay for the maintenance of a communal garden, but your neighbour has their own garden. Or in some cases, you might have different terms in your tenancy agreement around non-charge weeks. If you have any queries please get in touch.

## Will Housing Benefit or Universal Credit cover the increase in service charges?

If you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, the majority of your service charges will be covered apart from individual charges. More information about individual charges is included in the table below. If you're unsure please contact our Money Advice Team on [moneyadviceteam@onward.co.uk](mailto:moneyadviceteam@onward.co.uk) or by calling **0300 555 0600**.

## What if I can't afford the increase?

If you are worried about your service charges, please contact our Money Advice Team. We can offer support to help with your finances or support in helping you find employment, so please get in touch.

## Where can customers find a schedule of the services they receive?

Our Onward Environmental team provides grounds maintenance, cleaning, window cleaning, and waste management service for most customers. Most internal communal areas are cleaned fortnightly, with some properties and older persons schemes being cleaned more frequently. Window cleaning takes places usually every two months or as stated in the property agreement.

Grounds maintenance visits take place every two weeks. Litter picks are carried out on all visits. Grass is cut during the growing season, except in cases of extreme wet weather, and hedge and shrub reduction works are carried out from November to February. Some grassed areas, for example meadows, may be cut less frequently.

For those customers that receive a service from Onward Environmental, we will send a newsletter which sets out the services that we provide and when you can expect to receive these. You can find out more by visiting

[www.onward.co.uk/services/environmental-services/](http://www.onward.co.uk/services/environmental-services/) or giving us a call.

## Service charges explained

The table below sets out the different service charges and explains what these cover. In response to customer feedback, we have broken service charges down into individual charges to make it clearer what you pay for.

We review service charges every year to ensure customers are charged fairly and accurately for the services they receive. As a result, in some cases, you might see that we have added a new charge which you have not been charged for before. This is where a new service has been added or when we have reviewed charges and found that you have not been paying for a service that you have been receiving from us.

### 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 older persons 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 older persons and supported accommodation.
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.
Scheme Manager services	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 in older persons properties.
Septic tank	This charge is applied for maintenance of septic tanks at your scheme.

## Upkeep of communal areas

Communal cleaning	<p>This includes internal cleaning of communal areas, including vacuuming or mopping floors, wiping down skirting, balustrades, windowsills. This work is mainly carried out by our inhouse team, Onward Environmental, but in some cases by an external contractor. Most internal communal areas are cleaned every two weeks, with some properties and older persons schemes cleaned at a different frequency.</p>
Grounds maintenance	<p>This includes grass cutting, litter picking and weeding. In the Winter period from November to February this also includes hedge and shrub reductions. Grounds maintenance visits take place every two weeks across the year.</p> <p>Gritting bins are checked and refilled when needed. For some sites, such as older persons schemes, an external contractor will attend to grit surfaces whenever the ground temperature falls to 0°C.</p>
Pest control	<p>This charge is applied where a pest control contract is in place covering communal areas.</p>
Third party management	<p>This charge is applied when a third party provides estate services.</p>
Trees	<p>We have a legal responsibility to maintain trees. All customers with a communal tree on their scheme will be charged a proportion of the costs for the provision of our Tree Team. This will include things like the surveys conducted by our Tree Officers, and a portion of the costs to provide our Arborists who carry out the work.</p> <p>Any actual works carried out, such as pruning or felling trees, over the previous 12 months will be charged specifically to the customers on the scheme where the work was done, proportional to the size of each job carried out.</p>
Waste management	<p>All customers will be charged for a proportion of the cost of the provision of our Waste Management Team.</p> <p>Any actual works carried out, like fly tip removal, over the previous 12 months will be charged specifically to the customers on the scheme where the work was done, proportional to the size of each job carried out.</p>

## Upkeep of communal areas (cont.)

Window cleaning	This is the cost of our inhouse window cleaning service. A small number of areas are covered by external contractors. Most window cleaning takes place every two months. Our team use a pole reach system for windows at height which is safer for operatives, and more cost effective for customers.
<h3>Health &amp; Safety testing</h3>	
Health & Safety testing	This is the cost of periodic risk assessments and testing, including fire risk assessments, water safety testing, portable appliance testing and lightening conductors.
<h3>Provisions</h3>	
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 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 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 for general needs customers within individual tenancies and providing support through our Furniture Flex scheme.
Luncheon Club	Provision of meals in older persons schemes.
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 in older persons schemes.

## 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.
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If you need any help understanding this document, please give us a call on **0300 555 0600**, send us a message on WhatsApp to **07418 344 603**, or send an email to **customerservices@onward.co.uk**.

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tego dokumentu, zadzwoń do nas na numer 0300 555 0600, wyślij nam wiadomość na WhatsApp na numer 07418 344603 lub wyślij e-mail na adres [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى أي مساعدة في فهم هذه الوثيقة، فيرجى الاتصال بنا على 0300 555 0600، أو أرسل رسالة إلينا على رقم الواتس 07418 344603 أو أرسل رسالة بريد إلكتروني إلى [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

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اگر برای درک این سند به کمک نیاز دارید، لطفاً با ما با شماره 03005550600 تماس بگیرید، از طریق واتس‌اپ به شماره 07418 344603 برای ما پیام بفرستید یا یک ایمیل به [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

如果您在理解本文件时需要任何帮助, 请致电 0300 555 0600, 通过 WhatsApp 发送信息至 07418 344603, 或发送电子邮件至 [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

Haddii aad u baahan tahay in lagaa caawiyo fahamka dokumentigan, fadlan naga soo wac lambarkan 0300 555 0600, farriin noogu soo dir lambarkan WhatsApp-ta 07418 344603, ama email noogu soo dir [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

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Si vous avez besoin d'aide pour comprendre ce document, appelez-nous au 0300 555 0600, envoyez-nous un message sur WhatsApp au 07418 344603, ou envoyez un e-mail à [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

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