

A photograph of a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a light orange t-shirt, holding a young child with dark skin and curly hair. The child is wearing a grey tank top and orange and white striped pants. The woman is looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The child has their hand near their mouth.

Havebury

Housing Partnership

**Your rent and service
charges explained.**

2023-24





Introduction

Director of Operations

This leaflet sets out answers to questions you may have about your rent or service charges, as well as information about what help and support may be available to you.

As a not-for-profit organisation, all our money is re-invested in supporting you, your home, and the services we provide to you. This includes things such as materials to carry out repairs, as well as the contracts we have. Because of higher inflation, the costs of providing these services to you have also increased.

We plan to build an average of 210 new affordable homes each year for the next five years as well as investing in our existing homes. This includes replacing windows, kitchen, and bathrooms as part of our planned repairs programme. We will also be carrying out work on some of our homes to make these more energy efficient.

Although we understand that this may be the highest increase you may have had, we had to weigh this up with how our services would be affected if we didn't apply this increase. On pages four – six, you'll see we've provided details about additional help and support that may be available to you if you need it. This also includes our own support fund, which you can read about this on page six.

We hope this leaflet covers the information you may need. You can also scan the QR code on the front page to visit the 'frequently asked questions' section of our website.

If your questions aren't covered, please get in touch with us on 0300 3300 900 and select options 2, 1 and 2.

If you are concerned about making these payments or want to talk to us about what support could be available for you, please call us on the number above.

Jenny Spoor

How the increase is calculated

The government sets the rent levels. The usual increase is Consumer Price Index (CPI) + 1%. In the summer of 2022, the government consulted about rent increases because, with increased inflation, CPI could have been around 10%, meaning rent charges would also go up by this amount.

In December 2022, the government announced that housing providers could increase their rent by up to 7%.

We have put together a video that explains what your rent contributes to. Visit our website or scan the QR code below to view it.



When these changes take effect

The 7% increase will take effect from:

- For weekly charged rent - 3 April 2023.
- For monthly charged rent - 1 April 2023.

Rents are reviewed each year.

Cost of living



Everyone is feeling the extra pressure because of increased bills and living costs. We have put together some resources that you may find useful over the coming months.

How we can help

There are several ways we can help and support you. We have summarised some of these below, but there are others. Please get in touch with us if you know paying your rent will be a problem.

- Our Welfare and Benefits team can help you review your income and expenditure and offer advice on ways to maximise your income.
- Our support fund – this is open to all tenants and shared owners who are struggling to make their payments due to financial challenges. It provides temporary relief from genuine hardship and is not intended as a means of long-term support. There are specific criteria that need to be met.

The administration and issuing of the above funds will be at our discretion and on a case-by-case basis. Please get in touch if you think we can help.

For advice about your benefits, call 0300 3300 900, selecting options 2, 1 and 3. Alternatively, you can email myadvice@havebury.com

Cost of living continued

Help from other organisations

We've pulled together some useful information from other organisations, to help you find the support you need. You will find all of this on our website www.havebury.com/cost-of-living-support

Help for Households

The UK government has launched the Help for Households campaign. This sets out the support available to people, in one place. You can find help with:

The logo for the 'Help for Households' campaign, featuring the text 'Help for Households' in white on a green rectangular background with a white border.

- Financial support - including how to check if you are getting the benefits you are entitled to.
- Energy bills - including more information on the Cost of Living Payment.
- Family support - including more information on tax-free childcare and Child Benefit.
- Household costs - including more information about Council Tax rebates and budgeting loans.

There is also extra guidance around transport costs, help finding work, plus discounts and offers on everyday essentials.

www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk

On our website, you will find further information about:

- The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (Suffolk based)
- Help with health costs
- Food support

www.havebury.com/cost-of-living-support



Our support fund

This is open to all residents who are struggling to make payments due to financial challenges. It provides temporary relief from genuine hardship, and specific criteria must be met.

Here are some examples of how residents have benefited from the fund.

- A resident got medically discharged from work. Our Welfare and Benefits team ensured all her benefits were in place, as she also had children living with her. She used the support fund to help with the cost of gas, electricity, and food until she received her pension. The support she received stopped her from worrying.
- We have helped many people with 500 litres of heating oil so they could keep their homes warm during the winter months.
- We have helped people move from temporary accommodation into their first homes by furnishing them with goods from a local charity.
- A resident of ours sadly got diagnosed with cancer. She was a single mum, and we helped her buy food for the month and pay for her gas and electricity until her benefit payments came through.



Frequently asked questions

What if I already have an agreement in place?

If you have an agreement in place, your direct debit will be calculated to include the agreement you have already made.

I pay monthly - how is my direct debit calculated?

If you pay monthly, your direct debit is calculated by the weekly rent amount x 52 weeks divided by 12 months. This will cover you in months when there are five Mondays.

I have a small arrear on my account and no agreement in place. What do I need to do?

Your direct debit will be calculated over the financial year to bring your account clear at the end of the financial year. A financial year is April - April.

I pay monthly, but my account is not fully in advance - how will my payments be calculated?

If you are paying monthly and not fully in advance, we will bring your account into advance over the financial year.

I am struggling with my finances. Is there any help available?

There is a variety of support available. We have added some further information on pages four & five of this booklet.

My direct debit collection sometimes falls on a weekend - when will it be collected?

If your direct debit collection date falls on a weekend - it will never be collected early. It will always be collected the next working day

If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to call our Income team on 0300 3300 900 and select options 2, 1 and 2.



Housing Benefit

If you receive housing benefit from your local authority and they pay us directly for some, or all, of your rent or service charge, you do not need to do anything - we will notify your local authority of any changes directly. **If you receive housing benefit and it is paid to you. You will need to contact your local authority to notify them of your rent increase.**

Universal Credit

If you receive Universal Credit, you will need to notify the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) of any potential changes to your housing costs. You can do this by signing onto your Universal Credit account and updating your journal with your new rent charges, on the date your rent change takes place. Please also note that this cannot be done in advance of this date and, you will need to do this even if DWP pays your rent directly to us.

- **For weekly charged rent - 3 April 2023.**
- **For monthly charged rent - 1 April 2023.**

Service charge

A service charge is a cost towards the cost of providing and maintaining communal services associated with your home. This could include grass cutting, window cleaning or a door entry system in your block.

Or there may be some personal utilities, such as heating, in schemes where we have communal heating systems.

This charge is in addition to any rent or ground rent you may pay.



How are your service charges calculated?

To calculate the charge for the year ahead, we look at costs from the previous year and apply any contract changes that are likely to be introduced. We also consider other factors, such as inflation, VAT changes, or a change to the service provided.

Some costs, such as repairs, are very difficult to estimate, and therefore an estimate is calculated based on the total amount spent over the previous year.

Why an estimate and not an actual charge?

We will only charge you for what we spend on service charges. As these costs will be incurred in the future, we are only able to make an estimate. At the end of the 2023/24 financial year and before September 2024, we will send out a statement telling you what we actually spent in 2023/24.

Any difference between the estimated amount and the actual expenditure for 2023/24 will be adjusted on your next service charge estimate following that year, so April 2025. Similarly, the 2023/24 estimate you have received will have been adjusted for the difference between the estimated amount and the actual expenditure for 2021/22.

The types of costs included in eligible service charges

COSTS ELIGIBLE FOR HOUSING BENEFIT / UNIVERSAL CREDIT

These are costs related to the repairs to/maintenance of communal areas

Building cleaning	Costs relating to any cleaning incurred within the communal areas of your building
Communal utilities - electricity, gas, oil etc	Relating to communal supplies, such as stairwell lighting and heating of communal areas
Communal telephone lines	Costs relating to any communal phones or phone lines in communal areas for lifts, alarms etc
Communal internet charge	Costs relating to a communal internet service that is available in a communal area
Door entry	Costs relating to the servicing and maintenance of the communal door entry system
Electrical testing and emergency lighting	The cost of checking any electrical equipment that uses the communal supply, such as equipment in communal areas or larger items such as lifts. It also includes testing/servicing of emergency lighting
Fire safety	The cost of maintaining any fire safety equipment within the communal areas
Furniture/equipment	Costs relating to the usage of furniture and equipment for communal areas, such as communal lounges and kitchens
Grounds maintenance	The cost of maintaining any common areas of outdoor space, from cutting the grass to litter picking and maintaining the hedges
Legionella monitoring and testing	The costs of complying with our legal responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of our tenants by regularly assessing the risk of bacteria that cause Legionnaires' disease, a potentially fatal form of pneumonia
Lift	Costs relating to the servicing and maintenance of the communal lift
Managing agent costs	These costs are incurred when a third party looks after some or all of your communal services
Pest control	Pest control costs within both internal and external communal areas
Refuse/fly-tipping	Removal of waste and fly-tipping items from internal and external communal areas
Repairs - type one (all pay)	Repairs to any communal areas that all residents pay towards, such as door entry, lighting, and lift repairs.
Scheme staff	Scheme staff that complete service charge activities.
Tree maintenance	Costs relating to any tree works within communal grounds.
TV licences	The cost of the TV licence in a communal lounge.
Window cleaning	Cost of cleaning any communal windows.
Surplus/deficit adjustment	If there was an adjustment on your 2021/22 statement of actual costs (issued in September 2022) the surplus (under spend credit) or deficit (overspend additional charge) is carried forward, as previously notified, and has been included in your 2023/24 estimate.
Management fees	A management fee is included to cover the administrative cost of managing the communal services. It is calculated at 15% on all costs, except for managing agent costs, when our management fee is calculated at 5%.

The types of costs included in ineligible service charges

COSTS INELIGIBLE FOR HOUSING BENEFIT / UNIVERSAL CREDIT These are costs related to the provision of personal supplies and not repairs to/maintenance of communal areas

Personal utilities (gas, electricity and water supply to individual dwellings)	If there is only one communal supply for any of the utilities for where you live, the costs will be recharged through your service charge. If you have your own meter, the costs will be charged directly to you by your supplier
Sewage plant, bio-disc and septic tanks	These are the costs you would pay the water board if you were connected to the mains sewage system, including any repairs
Management fees	Costs relating to any communal phones or phone lines in communal areas for lifts, alarms etc

Personal utilities

If your home has a communal supply for any of your personal utilities, such as heating inside your homes (but not communal areas), these costs will be shown under 'ineligible' service charges (see above). This means these costs are not covered by housing benefit or Universal Credit, and you are responsible for covering the costs of these.

Your portion of these costs could be calculated on square footage, the number of bedrooms, or actual usage, if we can take individual meter readings. If you have a communal water supply, this is allocated over the number of homes that use the supply.

If you have any concerns about making these payments or need any advice about your finances, please get in touch with our team on 0300 3300 900 and select options 2, 1 and 2.

Service charge statement example

The address these charges relate to

These are the costs for this address for the year

Service Charges For: 19 Haversham Court, Princes Drive, Bury St. Edmunds

		Your Portion of Costs (Per Annum)
Account Description		Your Charge Amount
Costs Eligible for Housing Benefit		
Scheme Staff		142.54
Communal Electricity		445.58
Communal Gas		0.00
Building Cleaning (Communal Areas)		163.46
Door Entry System		11.67
Communal Repairs - Type 1 - All Residents Pay		62.42
Legionella Monitoring/Testing		0.00
Fire Safety		46.58
Electrical Testing/Emergency Lighting		23.08
Grounds Maintenance		123.77
Eligible Management Fees		120.00
Eligible (Surplus)/Deficit		-90.69
Total Eligible Costs		1,236.30
Total Eligible Cost per week		23.78
Costs Ineligible for Housing Benefit		
Personal Utilities Gas		0.00
Personal Utilities Water/Sewerage		511.73
Ineligible Management Fees		41.78
Ineligible Surplus/Deficit		-89.00
Total Ineligible Costs		788.35
Total Ineligible Cost per week		15.16
Total Costs for your home		2,024.65
Total Cost per week		38.94

These are the communal services that are received at this address

This is the total amount you pay either per week, per month, or per year

This is the yearly cost to provide service charges to this address

The costs are allocated by the number of addresses that benefit from the service. In this example, the communal electricity benefits 26 homes. so you pay 1/26th of the cost. Whereas some of our contracts benefit seven homes, so you would pay 1/7th of the cost.

When these charges are payable.

Costs that are classified as 'eligible' are allowable for housing benefit or Universal Credit. Any costs classified as 'ineligible', you need to pay for yourself.

Your 19 Digit Payment Reference: **633299999784450000**

2023/24

Costs for 13-38 Haversham Court, Princes Drive	Costs for 13-19 Haversham Court, Princes Drive	Property Adjustments
You Pay 1/26	You Pay 1/7	You pay all costs
Costs Eligible for Housing Benefit		
3,706.10	0.00	0.00
11,585.00	0.00	0.00
0.00	0.00	0.00
4,250.00	0.00	0.00
2,932.00	0.00	-101.10
1,054.61	152.99	0.00
0.00	0.00	0.00
1,211.10	0.00	0.00
600.00	0.00	0.00
2,873.57	92.75	0.00
		0.00
		0.00
Costs Ineligible for Housing Benefit		
0.00	0.00	0.00
13,305.00	0.00	0.00

If you lived in your home during the previous year, this is the adjustment from your annual service charge statement.

Summary of your rights and obligations

1. This summary, which briefly sets out your rights and obligations in relation to variable service charges, must by law accompany a demand for service charges. Unless a summary is sent to you with a demand, you may withhold the service charge. The summary does not give a full interpretation of the law and if you are in any doubt about your rights and obligations you should seek independent advice.

2. Your lease sets out your obligations to pay service charges to your landlord in addition to your rent. Service charges are amounts payable for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements, insurance or the landlord's costs of management, to the extent that the costs have been reasonably incurred.

3. You have the right to ask the First-tier Tribunal to determine whether you are liable to pay service charges for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements, insurance or management. You may make a request before or after you have paid the service charge. If the tribunal determines that the service charge is payable, the tribunal may also determine -

- who should pay the service charge and who it should be paid to;
- the amount;
- the date it should be paid by;
- how it should be paid.

However, you do not have these rights where-

- a matter has been agreed or admitted by you;
- a matter has already been, or is to be, referred to arbitration or has been determined by arbitration and you agreed to go to arbitration after the disagreement about the service charge or costs arose;
- or a matter has been decided by a court.

4. If your lease allows your landlord to recover costs incurred or that may be incurred in legal proceedings as service charges, you may ask the court or tribunal, before which those proceedings were brought, to rule that your landlord may not do so.

5. Where you seek a determination from the First-tier Tribunal, you will have to pay an application fee and, where the matter proceeds to an oral hearing, a hearing fee, unless you qualify for fee remission or exemption. Making such an application may incur additional costs, such as professional fees, which you may have to pay.

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6. The First-tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal (in determining an appeal against a decision of the First-tier Tribunal) have the power to award costs in accordance with Section 29 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

7. If your landlord -

- proposes works on a building or any other premises that will cost you or any other tenant more than £250, or
- proposes to enter into an agreement for works or services which will last for more than 12 months and will cost you or any other tenant more than £100 in any 12 month accounting period.

your contribution will be limited to these amounts unless your landlord has properly consulted on the proposed works or agreement or the First-tier Tribunal has agreed that consultation is not required.

8. You have the right to apply to the First-tier Tribunal to ask it to determine whether your lease should be varied on the grounds that it does not make satisfactory provision in respect of the calculation of a service charge payable under the lease.

9. You have the right to write to your landlord to request a written summary of the costs which make up the service charges. The summary must:

- cover the last 12 month period used for making up the accounts relating to the service charge ending no later than the date of your request, where the accounts are made up for 12 month periods; or
- cover the 12 month period ending with the date of your request, where the accounts are not made up for 12 month period.

The summary must be given to you within 1 month of your request or 6 months of the end of the period to which the summary relates whichever is the later.

10. You have the right, within 6 months of receiving a written summary of costs, to require the landlord to provide you with reasonable facilities to inspect the accounts, receipts and other documents supporting the summary and for taking copies or extracts from them.

11. You have the right to ask an accountant or surveyor to carry out an audit of the financial management of the premises containing your dwelling, to establish the obligations of your landlord and the extent to which the service charges you pay are being used efficiently. It will depend on your circumstances whether you can exercise this right alone or only with the support of others living in the premises. You are strongly advised to seek independent advice before exercising this right.

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12. Your lease may give your landlord a right of re-entry or forfeiture where you have failed to pay charges which are properly due under the lease. However, to exercise this right, the landlord must meet all the legal requirements and obtain a court order. A court order will only be granted if you have admitted you are liable to pay the amount or it is finally determined by a court, tribunal or by arbitration that the amount is due. The court has a wide discretion in granting such an order and it will take into account all the circumstances of the case.

How we can help you

We have a dedicated Income team with specialist welfare and benefits advisors who can help you:

- find the most convenient method of payment
- find advice if you are finding payment difficult
- maximise your income

How you can contact us

To discuss your finances	Income team	0300 3300 900 (options 2, 1 and 2) myaccount@havebury.com
To report a repair	Repairs team	0300 3300 900 (options 1, 1 and 2) repairs@havebury.com
To discuss an estates issue or our grounds maintenance contract	Tenancy & Estates team	0300 3300 900 (options 2 and 2) myarea@havebury.com
To discuss the service charge estimate or calculations	Service Charges team	0300 3300 900 servicecharges@havebury.com