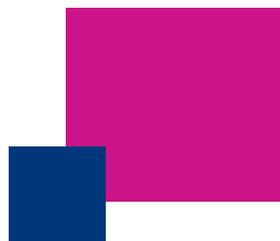
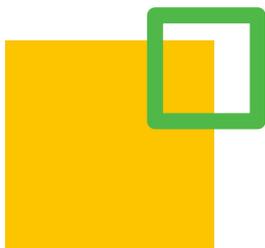


A guide to your rent and service charge



Understanding your Rent and Service Charges, how we calculate them, and what it means for you can be very confusing.

To try and help we have produced this guide to hopefully answer any questions you may have.



Crown
Simmons



www.crownsimmons.org.uk

Your **total weekly payment** is your rent plus your service charge.

Your **rent** is how much we charge for the use of the property.

Your **service charge** is the cost of delivering services to your scheme, block or estate.

Your rent

What do the government reforms mean for me?

In the summer of 2015, the Government changed the regulations that we need to follow when completing your annual rent review. Depending on the type of tenancy you have (including Independent Living and supported housing), you may get a 1% rent increase in your net rent this year. The government reforms do not affect your service charge. We adjust this every year in line with the terms of your tenancy agreement to reflect the cost of delivering services.

Why might my rent differ to someone else's?

This could be due to the type of rent you pay, the type of tenancy you hold and the date you signed up for your tenancy.

When will my new rent start?

The start date for your new rent and service charge is on your rent notification letter. Different tenancy types may have different start dates.

Do I need to update my payments?

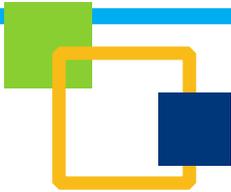
If you pay by Direct Debit, you don't need to do anything because we will automatically adjust your payments (including any arrears). If you pay by bank standing order, get in touch with us and we'll give you details to take to your bank with the new adjusted figures. If you receive housing benefit, you need to tell your local housing benefit department what your new rent is. However, if you live in the borough of Elmbridge, you won't need to do anything because we'll notify them for you.

What do I need to do if I claim Universal Credit?

If you receive Universal Credit and it covers your rent, you'll need to call the official helpline on 0345 600 0732 so the government can update your payments. They will not be updated automatically.

What can I do if I'm having problems paying my rent and service charges?

If you're worried about paying your rent, please get in contact with your neighbourhood manager. Citizens Advice also give independent and confidential advice. Phone their advice line on 03444 111 444.



Your service charge

Your service charge covers the cost of services we provide to our scheme, estate or block of flats, such as communal cleaning, gardening and lift servicing in shared areas.

What if I am paying an Affordable Rent? If you have an Affordable Rent tenancy, you will not find any details about your service charges because it is included in your rent.

Do I have to pay the service charge? Yes. If we provide a service to your estate, scheme or block of flats, you will have to pay us a service charge. This is a condition of your tenancy agreement which you signed when your tenancy began. To discuss your services in more detail, phone us on 01372 461 440.

Why do I pay a service charge when I live in a house? You're required to contribute to the upkeep of nearby public open spaces, like parks and gardens.

If your service charge is variable...

Your tenancy agreement says we need to use a variable service charge system for your property when calculating your service charge. This means that every February/March, we estimate the cost of each communal service and charge you your share of that estimate.

These estimates are worked out by using contractual information and analysing past costs.

If the amount spent on providing services exceeds the estimate, you will be responsible for paying the difference. If services cost less than the estimate, similarly, any overpayment will be carried forward and reflected on your service charge statement. If you claim housing benefit, your entitlement next year will be re-assessed to take any adjustments into account.

You have the right to challenge the variable service charge amount. Please see the 'Your rights and obligations' sheet to find out more.

If your service charge is fixed...

This means it's estimated based on what we spent in previous years, inflation and known contract prices plus it's fixed for 12 months. We regularly review fixed service charges to make sure the costs are set correctly and you're getting good value for money.

If the actual amount we spend on providing the services exceeds our estimate, we will be responsible for the difference. If it falls short of our estimate, we will retain the difference.

There is no process for Crown Simmons or residents to recover any under or over payments for fixed service charges because they are considered part of your rent.

Your service charge statement explained

GENERAL SERVICES

Grounds Maintenance - This covers the upkeep of the grounds and trees around your home.

Cleaning – This covers both the cost of cleaning your shared areas like the corridors, the guest room, the laundry and common room plus the cost of cleaning communal windows in your block or scheme (if you have them). The cost of cleaning your shared areas is split only between residents with access to these areas.

Electricity – This is the cost of electricity for both your shared areas and your home (if you pay for personal electricity through your service charge). The cost of electricity for shared areas is split only between residents with access to them.

Water charges – This is the cost of providing water both to your home (if applicable) and to your shared areas.

Heating charges (Gas) – This is the cost of providing heat to both your shared areas and to your home (if applicable). Any shared area costs are split only between residents with access to them.

Pest control – This covers removing anything considered a pest, like squirrels, foxes and mice from shared areas.

Water purity testing – This is the cost of periodic Legionella testing of the communal water tank.

Communal TV aerial repairs – This is the cost of any repairs to the communal aerial system.

Lift servicing - This is the cost of lift servicing and repairs. This is split only between residents with access to lifts.

Door entry repairs – This is the cost of servicing and repairing your door entry system (if you have one). This is split only between residents with access to the block that use the system.

Depreciation – This is what you pay each year for large spend items, like communal carpets, spread over the lifespan of the items.

Telephone – This is the cost of the payphone, lift telephone and the community alarm phone line. We've already deducted the money received from payphones from the total.

Electrical repairs and testing – This is the cost of carrying out electrical repairs and periodic testing in your shared areas to comply with Health and Safety regulations.

Fire equipment, fire risk assessment & fire testing – This includes servicing, testing and replacing fire equipment. It also includes regular fire panel testing and fire risk assessments as required by law.

Third party charges – Where we don't own the building, these are the costs charged to us by the managing agent that provides services to the block.

Communal repairs – This is the cost of any minor work or repairs to the shared areas of the building.

INDEPENDENT LIVING ONLY SERVICES

Staff costs – This is the cost of providing a Housing Services Officer.

Laundry repairs & servicing – The cost of servicing and any repairs to washing machines and tumble dryers in your scheme.

Community alarm maintenance – The cost of servicing and carrying out repairs to your community call system.

Fixtures & fittings – The cost of providing items for your communal lounges and kitchens.