

Service charges explained



This leaflet is for customers of HomeZone Living – including customers of Bromford Support – and those living in supported housing.

It does not apply to leaseholders or customers who live in shared ownership properties.

The leaflet explains:

- what service charges are
- the three types of service charge
- the standard of service you can expect from us
- how we increase our service charges.

What are service charges?

Service charges pay for services such as water and garden maintenance, and facilities such as door-entry systems and fire equipment. HomeZone pays for these services and then recovers the cost through your service charge. This enables you to budget, as you will know exactly what you need to pay and when. It also reduces the chance of unexpected bills that you would otherwise have to pay.

Your service charge is a separate charge from your rent or licence fee. It pays for services and facilities:

- that are available just to you, or
- that you share with other residents in your housing or scheme.

We will:

- tell you what your service charges are when you first sign your tenancy or licence agreement with us
- give you a breakdown of each of the services we are providing to you, and the weekly cost.

The three types of service charge

1. Housing-related service charges – These charges pay for shared facilities or services, such as gardening, maintaining lighting, and cleaning communal hallways.

What is included?

The table below:

- details all the services we or our contractors may provide to you, depending on your individual housing, scheme and circumstances
- tells you what standards you can expect.

| Services we or our contractor provides | The standards you can expect |
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| Grounds Maintenance shared areas | <p>Our contractor will do one weed treatment and one sweep every year of the garages and the parking and drying areas, and a fortnightly litter pick.</p> <p>We will arrange to cut the verges and greens in any grass areas 16 times a year and do a litter pick every two weeks. We will attend to established shrubs monthly.</p> <p>For service areas to shops our contractor will do one weed treatment a year, empty bins daily and litter pick six days a week. There will be a mechanical sweep of the area every week.</p> <p>Unadopted roads and paths will have one weed treatment and one sweep a year, and fortnightly litter picks.</p> |
| Paying heating and lighting bills for shared areas | <p>We will pay for the electricity and gas to heat and light corridors and other shared areas. We will ensure that we pay all utility bills for these areas on time so you always have heating and lighting there.</p> |

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| Maintaining and servicing | |
| Door-entry systems | If you have a door-entry system for your home, we will maintain it in full working order. |
| Shared lifts | If there is a lift in your scheme, we will maintain it, including servicing it monthly, to ensure it is in full working order and complies with the relevant law. |
| Fire equipment in communal areas | <p>If we have provided fire equipment in communal areas, we will maintain it, including servicing it regularly, so that it is in full working order and complies with the relevant law.</p> <p>We will service the communal fire equipment as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communal fire detection and alarm systems – every three months • emergency lighting systems – every six months • stand-alone smoke detectors in communal areas – once a year • fire extinguishers – once a year. |
| Other services | |
| Providing other contracted services | <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain CCTV and wastewater pumping stations • pay for any electrical testing to white goods we have provided, if needed. |

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| <p>Providing other non-contracted services</p> | <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collect rubbish from shared areas • remove graffiti from shared areas within 48 hours • pay communal water rates on time so you always have water. |
| <p>Repairing communal facilities</p> | <p>We will carry out repairs to communal heating and lighting, and to communal TV aerials if you have these on your scheme.</p> <p>We may pay for repairs to any white goods (for example, fridge or washing machine) that we have provided in your own home.</p> <p>When you report your repair, we will tell you how urgent we think it is and when we expect to do it. Please ask for our leaflet, 'Keeping your home in good repair', which tells you more about our repairs service.</p> |
| <p>Replacing capital items</p> | <p>We will maintain a fund and pay for capital items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in shared areas, such as lifts and door-entry systems, when they wear out • in your home for white goods, carpets and furniture, if we provide them. |

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| Managing central services | We will pay to administer our service contracts, arrange payment of contractors' and other bills, and calculate and administer the service charges. |
| Providing shared facilities | We will pay for shared facilities such as shared lounges, televisions and shared kitchens. |
| Paying rent for garages | We will pay for repairs to any garage you rent from us. |

If you would like to know more about what the contract specifies for any of these services, please ask your Housing Manager or the person providing your support.

Service quality checks

If you live on an estate, your Housing Manager is responsible for checking that services on your estate meet our standards.

If you live in a supported housing scheme managed by Bromford Support, your Support Worker or Housing Manager is responsible for checking that services on your scheme meet our standards.

If you have any complaints or comments about housing services, please contact us.

2. Personal-related service charges

If you live in shared accommodation (where you have your own tenancy or licence agreement but share living space), you may also pay personal service charges. These are to provide heating, lighting, cooking facilities, and water for your private living space.

You are responsible for paying these charges and you can't claim housing benefit for them. To find out more, please contact the Home Income Team on the numbers below.

3. Support-related service charges

You may have to pay a service charge to us for the support services you receive from us. You may qualify for Supporting People grant to cover the costs of this charge – please contact the person providing your support for more information.

We base our charges for support on the costs of providing the service. The County Council's Supporting People team commissions and agrees this support. We will provide the support you need in line with our contract with the Supporting People Team. Please ask the person providing your support for more details.

How often does the service charge increase?

We review your service charge each year. The review takes account of the cost of contracts, inflation and quotations for the coming year.

We will:

- tell you four weeks before your service charge changes
- consult you on any policy changes, including any new charges
- itemise your service charge so that you can see what we spend it on
- change your direct debit to ensure that you make payments on time, and tell you this
- send you a statement of your rent and service charges every three months and when you ask for one.

Please contact us if you would like to know more about your service charges. We will be happy to help.

If you have difficulty understanding this information or would prefer to receive an alternative format (i.e. translated, audio, Braille or large print) please contact us.

HomeZone Living

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Minicom 01543 420878

Email customerservices@homezonehousing.org.uk

**If you are a customer of Bromford Support,
please speak to the Bromford colleague who is
working with you for more information.**



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