

Your Home – Housing

Your Rent

The rent you pay helps to cover the cost to Papworth Trust of providing your home. Rents are set using a Government formula based on property values in the area where you live, and average earnings for the area to make sure they are affordable.

We will send you a rent statement every three months.

How to pay your rent

It is important that you pay your rent regularly and on time. Please contact us as soon as possible if you think you might have difficulty paying your rent so that we can advise you.

You can pay your rent in the following ways:

- **By post** – cheques or postal orders can be sent through the post to 1 Saxongate, Bradbury Place, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 3RR
- **By debit or credit card over the telephone** – you can call us on 0330 678 0008 option 2 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday
- **By direct debit** – ask us for a direct debit form
- **By standing order** – either ask for a standing order form or give your bank the following payment details:
 - Barclays Bank account number 30699470
 - Sort code 20-17-68
 - Reference number – you will need to contact us to ask what your reference number should be

You can arrange for the council to pay your housing benefit direct to Papworth Trust. But, if you claim benefits such as income support or job seekers allowance, Government reforms will mean that in the future your benefits will all be merged into one benefit called Universal Credit which will include Housing Benefit. You will then be responsible for making sure that you pass the Housing Benefit to us to pay your rent as you will no longer be able to ask for it to be paid directly to us.

Changes to your rent

We review your rent once a year on the anniversary of the date you started your tenancy, or in April if your tenancy started in or before 2009. You will get a month's written notice of any changes to your rent. If you have a Secure Tenancy the Fair Rent Officer will also review the rent increase, and tell us the maximum rent we can charge you.

There will normally only be one increase to your rent each year, but if we make improvements to your home, a further change may be added. In this situation we would get your agreement before the work was done, and let you know the date of the increase.

Rent arrears

It is important that you pay your rent regularly and on time. Not paying your rent is a breach of your tenancy agreement and could result in you losing your home.

If you think you may have difficulty paying your rent please contact your Housing Officer immediately to discuss how we may be able to help you. If your account does fall into arrears it is expected that you will repay the amount overdue as soon as possible. If you are unable to make up the difference, we will discuss with you a realistic weekly amount for you to pay until the debt is clear.

We take a firm approach with rent arrears. Where we have not been given a good reason or explanation we will take legal action to recover the money you owe. We will try to find an alternative solution but if we take legal action it may result in you losing your home.

Housing benefit

If you are on a low income or claiming benefits, you may be entitled to claim housing benefit to help you pay your rent. To find out if you are eligible you will need to complete a claim form and submit it to your local housing benefit department. If you are claiming income support, pension credit or means tested jobseeker allowance you will need to make a claim through the Jobcentre Plus or pension service office that you claim your benefit from. If you are joint tenants you can both make a claim.

When making a claim you will be asked for:

- A copy of your tenancy agreement, you will have been given a copy when you signed it
- Proof of earnings/benefits and the earnings/benefits of any other members of your household.

You are advised to make your claim for housing benefit before your tenancy starts and to provide proof that you have done so. You can provide them with a copy of your tenancy agreement once you have received it.

- If the claim is not received before or during the first week of your tenancy, Housing Benefit may not be paid from the start of your tenancy unless you have a justifiable reason for the delay.
- If you are not entitled to receive the full amount of housing benefit to cover all of your rent you are responsible for paying the difference
- Please note that any delay in making a claim for housing benefit may result in rent arrears which you will be liable for.

Please note that until you have received confirmation that you will get housing benefit, you are liable for your rent and responsible for making payments to us until your housing benefit starts.

Outstanding debt

If you decide to move out of your home, it is expected that your rent account will be up to date. If there is any rent outstanding you will be asked to settle this debt within four weeks of the end of the tenancy. If you think you may have difficulty doing this, please contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

In the same way, if there are any amounts outstanding with respect to repairs or any other charges the same procedure applies.

Other charges

Depending on what type of accommodation you live in there may be other charges as listed below:

Service charge

A 'service charge' is an amount you have to pay to cover the cost of providing and maintaining shared areas and is divided among the tenants who have a right to use them. For example, if you share a house with three other tenants and there is the use of a shared living room, kitchen, hallway and bathroom, the cost of maintaining these areas would be split between the four people who share the house. The money we collect as a service charge is only used for that particular communal area.

What's included:

- **Electricity** – a charge for the amount of electricity used in the shared areas
- **Gas and heating** – a charge for the supply of gas to, and heating of, shared areas
- **Cleaning** – cost of providing cleaners for the shared rooms and the windows for these areas
- **Machine hire** – hire of TV and DVD or laundry equipment
- **Fire safety** – regular checks and maintenance of fire and heat detection equipment
- **Legionella monitoring** – regular checks and maintenance to prevent the risk of Legionnaires disease
- **Repair of plant and equipment** – repair to or replacement of equipment provided by the Trust for all tenants to use
- **Maintenance** – maintenance that needs to be done on a regular basis to the communal areas such as internal decoration
- **Grounds maintenance** – general garden work to maintain the garden and keep it manageable
- **Maintenance and servicing** – to installations and for regular safety checks such as boiler servicing and fire extinguisher checks
- **Depreciation** – an amount to cover wear and tear of furniture, fixtures and fittings that are provided by the Trust that will need replacing over a given lifespan such as fire alarm systems, carpets, curtains and so on
- **Insurance** – buildings and contents insurance for the communal areas only
- **TV licence** – the cost of a communal licence
- **Specialist equipment** – servicing of specialist items provided by the Trust such as overhead hoist tracking, lifts and specialist baths.

Changes to service charge

Your service charge will be reviewed each year. Any changes to the services you receive will be taken into account and charges will be based on bills that we have received during the year. The service charge will normally only be changed once a year, but if additional unexpected charges occur during the year, we may have to change it more than once. If this happens, you will be given four weeks written notice.

Household charge

This is charged to tenants who live in shared housing. It covers the cost of utilities that are for personal use only such as the cost of electricity and heating within your own bedroom. It is calculated as a percentage of the overall charge for the property taking into account the number of rooms. The household charge is not eligible for housing benefit; therefore, you are responsible for making this payment to Papworth Trust.