



Service charge review 2025

Your questions answered

LSE





**Introduction
from Julie Doyle,
Chief Executive,
Amplus**

We've now been operating as Amplus for several months, and I'm really pleased with the progress that's being made in a number of areas of the organisation.

We're making decisions and putting structures in place that will help us enhance the services we provide to you, our customers.

However, we're doing this in the face of some continued challenges, including rising costs. As outlined in your lease or transfer with us, we review rent and service charges at the beginning of each financial year.

We've carefully considered our options this year, and we've made the tough choice to implement a rise in charges for the year ahead where necessary.

This pack contains another letter which details your new charges and explains exactly what this means for you.

We've also provided answers to some questions that you may have and some further information that's relevant to your agreement with us, where applicable.

If you still have questions or concerns after reading through this information, please don't hesitate to get in touch by calling **0800 111 4013**. Our colleagues are ready and waiting to help you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Doyle', written in a cursive style.

Julie Doyle
Chief Executive, Amplus

Service charge review

Why are you increasing my charges?

In the current circumstances, we understand that any increase to your service charges isn't good news. However to enable us to keep up with rising costs, we need to increase service charges for the year ahead. Increasing our charges is essential to making sure that we can continue to fulfil our responsibilities in accordance with your lease or transfer.

We also need to make sure that you're paying enough into a sinking fund to cover any future major works and to avoid large invoices.

How is the increase calculated?

In accordance with your lease or transfer, you're required to make service charge payments for the costs of services provided to you.

Your service charge is made up of several elements. Each element won't increase at the same rate because it's based on the actual costs of the service last year and the anticipated increase for the year ahead.

Why have you changed the name of my sinking fund contributions?

We've decided to introduce one single sinking fund contribution to cover all future planned and major works, rather than running two separate funds. We believe this will be a more efficient way of managing these contributions and covering the costs of required work.

This will also make it easier for you to see and understand the total amount in your overall sinking fund rather than having two separate amounts of money for different works.

We've provided a guide to service charges, including how we set and manage them, at the end of this booklet.

Why has my sinking fund contribution increased?

We've been thoroughly reviewing your scheme's sinking fund to ensure we have sufficient funds in place for future works to maintain and improve your scheme.

In some cases, you may have received a significant increase in your service charge for your sinking fund contribution. This decision has not been made lightly, but it's necessary to ensure we continue to have funds available for essential major works and to prevent having to invoice you.

How is the money I pay for service charges spent?

As a not-for-profit organisation, every penny we receive from you is spent on services you receive. We're committed to using the money we receive in the best possible way and work hard to deliver value for money by spending efficiently.

Do I need to adjust my Direct Debit?

If you pay by Direct Debit, you don't need to do anything; we'll adjust your payments for you. You'll receive a separate letter from Allpay in March confirming the change. Please check this letter to ensure your Direct Debit has been adjusted accordingly.

I pay by standing order, do I need to adjust that?

If you pay by standing order, you'll need to contact your bank to arrange to pay the new amount. Our bank details can be found on your review letter that accompanies this booklet. Please ensure you use your master agreement reference number as the payment reference. If you need to check this, please log into My Account or contact us. If you'd like to set up a Direct Debit instead of making payments by standing order, please contact our Homeownership Team on **0800 111 4013**.

How can I track my payments?

You can access a statement by logging into My Account. If you don't have an account, please call Customer Services on **0800 111 4013** to register.

I'm entitled to financial support towards my housing payments, what do I need to do?

If you receive Pension Credit, you'll need to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of your new charge. You can do this by calling the Pension Service helpline on **0800 731 0469**. You can also report the changes by post. It's important that you don't report the change before it comes into effect because this may delay your payments.

If you're eligible for Housing Benefit, whether payments are made direct to us or to you, it's your responsibility to contact your local authority directly to inform them of the change. If you need any support with this, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

What if my benefit entitlement doesn't cover the increase?

If your entitlement doesn't cover your payments, you'll need to increase your payments to cover the difference. If you're unable to do this, or think your entitlement is incorrect, please contact our Homeownership Team on **0800 111 4013** as soon as possible to discuss your situation.

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

If you're struggling to pay your service charge, please get in touch with our Homeownership Team at the earliest opportunity.

What can you do to support me?

Our Homeownership Team is here to help you and can refer you to our specialist Money Advisors or independent debt advisors. They can help you to manage your finances and support you through any change in circumstances. There's also a range of resources on our Customer Wellbeing Hub to support your financial wellbeing, including access to independent debt advice.



amplus.co.uk/cost-of-living

What if I refuse to pay?

We understand that you might be unhappy with these increases and consider refusing to pay. If you take this decision, it'll result in arrears building up on your account and we'll then have to take action to recover the money that's due. This can affect your credit rating and even put you at risk of losing your home. We want to avoid this unnecessary situation as it may mean you face more

debt and possibly legal fees, which would only make your financial circumstances more difficult. If you miss a payment or fall into arrears, you must get in touch with our Homeownership Team as early as possible to discuss any difficulties and what options are available to you. We're here to help you.

Where is my property insurance certificate?

Following the merger, we're aligning our renewal date for our insurance policies. Going forward, this will be due for renewal at the end of March each year. In the meantime, an interim certificate is available on our website.

We'll send you a copy of our new property insurance certificate in April and we'll also explain any changes to the previous insurance policy, if any.

The property insurance charge included in your letter is an estimated charge for the year and we'll write to you when we send the certificate to let you know your actual property insurance cost for the year. Any adjustment will be made in your annual accounts.

Service charge FAQs

What is a service charge?

Your service charge is the money you pay towards the day-to-day running costs of the scheme or area where you live. Your charge covers many different services, depending on your lease or transfer.

A variable service charge means that you pay the same amount every month during the financial year (April to March). This charge is based on how much we know or estimate it'll cost to provide services on your scheme.

Within six months of the end of the financial year, annual accounts will be produced to show your income and expenditure for the year. If the service charge collected doesn't cover the actual cost of the services provided, we'll request a payment for the shortfall, or include the recovery in the following year's service charge, depending on your lease. Any surplus will be credited to your individual customer account or included in your following year's service charge, depending on your lease.

How will you inform me about my service charge?

Enclosed is a copy of your service charge schedule. Your service charge schedule is in a clear format, which details the services you receive and the costs of each service provided.

Can I choose not to use the services provided?

The total cost of the services provided are shared equally by everyone who benefits from them, or in line with the apportionments set out in your lease or transfer agreement.

Customers can't opt out of these services if they are being provided in line with your lease or transfer agreement. For example, if the service charge contributes to maintaining a lift in a block of flats, you can't opt out of the service charge by saying you always use the stairs.

Service charge items explained



Call system/Lifeline costs

This charge pays for emergency call monitoring. In most cases, this also includes the cost of a maintenance contract and emergency telephone costs.



CCTV maintenance

This is the cost of maintaining the security camera monitoring systems.



Communal cleaning

This usually covers the costs of cleaning communal areas, floors, windows and gutters.



Communal electricity rates

You may have to contribute towards communal electricity charges. These are for items such as communal internal and external lighting. You're normally responsible for all utility supplies that directly serve your property and any charges from external suppliers intended for your own personal domestic use.



Communal grounds maintenance

This covers the costs of the maintenance of external communal areas that aren't maintained by the local authority.



Communal TV aerial maintenance

The cost of maintaining a communal TV aerial system.



Communal water rates

You may have to contribute towards communal water charges. These are for services such as a water supply to communal gardens. You're normally responsible for all utility supplies that directly serve your property and any charges from external suppliers intended for your own personal domestic use.



Door entry costs

These cover the servicing and maintenance of any communal door entry systems.



Fire alarms and emergency lighting

This includes the cost of servicing fire appliances, emergency lighting, servicing and maintenance of communal alarm systems and communal smoke alarms.



General repairs and maintenance

This is the cost of repairs which we're responsible for arranging under the terms of your lease or transfer.



Ground rent

Some leases allow for a nominal ground rent. If applicable, this cost will be detailed on your review letter.



Heating system contract

This covers the servicing of communal and/or property heating systems where we're responsible in accordance with your lease or transfer.



Legionella testing and remedials

This cost is for a monthly check and a bi-annual risk assessment. This is a legal requirement and work is conducted by an approved contractor.



Lift servicing and maintenance

This covers the cost of maintaining a lift, including specific lift insurance.



Management fee

In accordance with your lease or transfer, you're required to pay a fee to us for items such as managing and implementing service charges, setting up contracts where required, managing rent and service charge accounts, administration costs and the costs incurred in providing a dedicated Homeownership Team.



PAT Testing

This covers the cost of annual checks of electrical items in communal areas.



Property/building insurance

This covers the structure of your property and communal buildings - where applicable on schemes - against insurable risks. Please note, you're still required to source your own contents insurance to protect your own belongings.



Refuse disposal

This covers the costs of waste disposal which the local council isn't responsible for. This includes fly-tipping or any personal items left in communal areas that pose a fire risk and need to be disposed of. This also includes the cost of any bin cleaning services where applicable.



Scheme staff costs

These costs cover the gross employment of the Scheme Manager where applicable.



Sinking funds

If your lease or transfer permits the collection of the above, we'll collect a contribution based on the estimated expenditure of replacing, repairing, or renewing large communal items. This can include a new roof or replacement doors. The contributions are held in trust in a separate account for your scheme.



IT connection charges

This cost covers the office telephone and broadband.



Assurance fee/Audit fee

Your annual accounts are audited in line with your lease or transfer requirements. This is either a factual findings with an assurance fee, or a full audit with an audit fee.



Utilisation of surplus or deficit

Where your lease or transfers allows, we may carry forward any surplus or deficit from the latest audited annual accounts.
