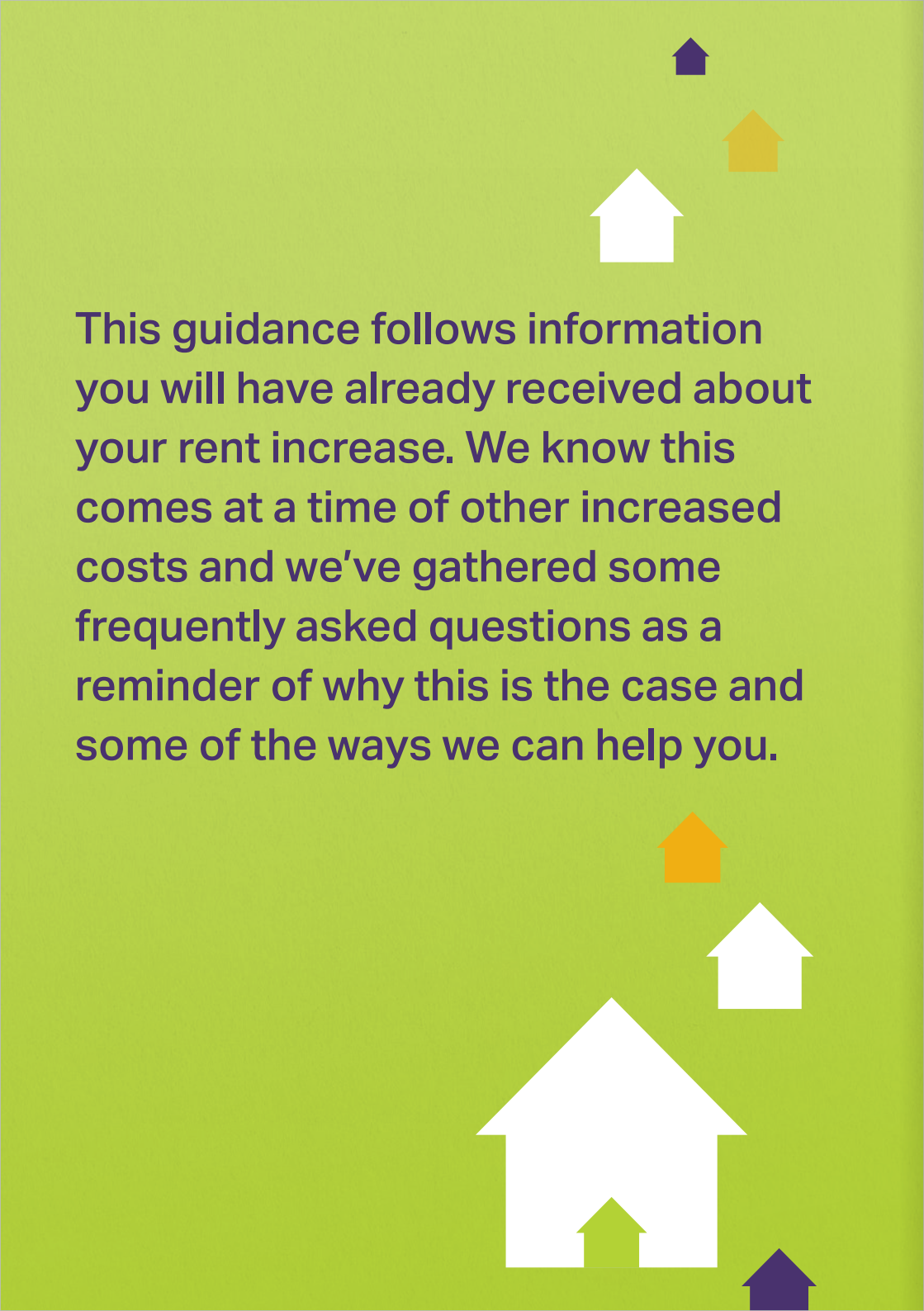




Guidance on your rent increase

Feb 2024





This guidance follows information you will have already received about your rent increase. We know this comes at a time of other increased costs and we've gathered some frequently asked questions as a reminder of why this is the case and some of the ways we can help you.

YOUR RENT EXPLAINED



When is my rent increasing?

We conduct our rent reviews each year to take effect from the first Monday in April. This year, the new charges apply from Monday 1st April 2024.

How much will my rent increase by and how have you calculated this?

The rent increase from April 2024 will be 7.7%.

Our rents are reviewed every year in line with the Government's rent setting framework, using an agreed formula, which is the same for all housing associations across England.

The rent framework states that rents can be increased by a measure of inflation called the Consumer Price Index (CPI), taken from the previous September, plus 1%.

In September 2023 CPI was 6.7%, therefore the rent increase will be 7.7%.

Why is my rent increasing?

Like all other landlords, the cost to run services, repair and improve homes has increased due to increased inflation. This rent increase allows us to maintain our investment in our homes. For example, last year we completed nearly 35,000 repairs which cost £22.4 million. We also spent £14.5 million investing in your homes.

As a 'profit for purpose' organisation, we use rental income to fund our services and running costs. We have no paid stakeholders, and no-one benefits from profit payments.

When should I pay my rent?

The rent should be paid on Monday for the week ahead. If you do not do this, your account will be in debt, and we will send you arrears letters.



YOUR RENT EXPLAINED



Where does the rent money go?

We use rent money we receive to provide services, maintain existing homes, and build new homes for those who need them the most. With high inflation costs, everything costs more including materials and labour. Emh must also ensure its homes meet standards set by the Government on quality and safety. We must ensure our homes are energy efficient. This is a good thing as it will reduce wasted energy and the carbon footprint of homes, as well as improving your homes. Although there is a cost to making our homes energy efficient, over time it will result in energy savings for our customers. Emh is aiming to achieve an Energy Performance Rating (EPC) of C or above for all of its homes by 2030. This has clear benefits for the environment and customers. The estimated cost of achieving this is approximately £109m.

How is the rent money spent?

We provide a breakdown of how the rent money is spent in our Annual Report to Residents, which we publish annually on our website www.emh.co.uk.

What if I can't afford the increase?

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please talk to us. We are here to help.

We have our own Money Matters team. They can provide help and support to increase your income and reduce your expenditure. They can also signpost you to organisations who offer free, independent money and debt advice.

If you would like to speak to a member of our Money Matters team, please call them on **0300 123 6000** or email moneymatters@emh.co.uk

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, your benefit will increase with your rent.

YOUR SERVICE CHARGE EXPLAINED



What is a service charge?

A service charge is an amount you pay towards the costs of services and repairs in communal areas. This charge is in addition to your rent. The service charges you pay will be set out in your tenancy agreement or lease.

How is the service charge calculated?

Your services charges are calculated using:

- ▶ The previous year's actual costs
- ▶ Any known or estimated changes in costs for the current year
- ▶ Added inflation from the previous July (which for last year was 6.8%)

This gives an overall cost for the scheme, which is divided equally between the customers who receive the services. You will only pay for your share of the services you receive.

You'll receive details of your service charge breakdown with your rent notification letter.

Why am I not paying the same for service charges as my neighbour/somebody I know on another estate?

The charges are calculated based on the scheme costs and then allocated per property. The split across properties can vary dependent on the property size and type, and services received.

What other services is emh charging for?

You will only pay charges applicable to your property.

Why am I paying for fly-tipping/graffiti?

It is important that we maintain the good appearance of our communal areas. To do this it is necessary to deal with fly-tipping and graffiti. This is a cost funded through service charges.

What if I think my charge is incorrect?

If you have a query in relation to your 2024/25 service charge, please contact us by 15 March 2024 so that we can investigate your concerns. Email: rentandservicechargequeries@emh.co.uk.

YOUR SERVICE CHARGE EXPLAINED



Type of charge	Description
Communal cleaning	The cleaning cost for any shared communal areas at your scheme including window cleaning, if applicable.
Communal electricity and lighting	Costs include the lighting, maintenance, and electricity for any shared communal area at your scheme.
Communal heating and hot water	Heating and hot water (electricity/gas) in any shared communal area.
Communal grounds and tree maintenance	Gardening services provided to shared communal green spaces in any shared area.
Communal TV aerial and maintenance	Maintenance and servicing of communal television/aerial systems.
Communal electrical appliance testing	Safety testing of communal electrical appliances.
Communal water	Water provided within communal areas.
Management charge	Third party management agency fees including managing agents and associated costs.
Guest flat costs	Guest flat servicing costs within your scheme.
Communal area refuse removal (refuse/fly-tipping)	Removal of fly-tipped rubbish left in any shared communal area.
Provisions	Cyclical replacement of various items specific to your shared communal area, for example replacement of door entry system, fencing, cycle racks, bin store etc.
Communal door entry maintenance	Day to day maintenance costs towards communal entrance doors and entry systems.
Caretaker	Caretaker costs if provided.
Admin fee 15%	Standard administration charge to fund service charge management and collection.

YOUR SERVICE CHARGE EXPLAINED



Type of charge	Description
Cleaning and testing of communal water tanks (Buildings, plants, equipment and installation)	Maintenance contracts covering electrical equipment within any shared communal areas, items such as lifts, sewage pumps, laundry equipment etc.
Staff costs and/or intensive housing management	Staffing costs if provided.
Communal area other services costs (Sundry Items)	Small miscellaneous items or services within shared facilities such as toilet rolls in communal toilets.
Tenant accommodation-specific charges	These charges are applied and charged as part of your tenancy agreement for example home contents insurance.
Ground rent	Ground rent payable as a leaseholder to the freeholder of the property.
Alarm call	Costs to manage and maintain the warden call system.
Heating and hot water system (Individual)	Gas or electricity relating to the heating and hot water in your home.
Insurance/Audit	Buildings insurance and audit fees if your property is within a shared ownership scheme.
Garden maintenance	Individual garden maintenance provided at some individual properties.
Communal furniture fixtures and fittings	Communal furniture replacements for items in shared communal areas.
Communal firefighting and smoke alarm maintenance	Costs for any maintenance and servicing of communal fire equipment.
Communal lift maintenance	Communal lift repairs and contracts including telephone lines.
Communal firefighting and smoke alarm maintenance	Costs for any contracts, maintenance, and servicing of communal fire equipment.
Communal site security Communal CCTV maintenance	Communal CCTV maintenance and site security.
Communal area pest control	Removal of pest infestations (rodents etc.) from communal areas.

YOUR RENT PAYMENTS EXPLAINED



Do I need to do anything if I am receiving Universal Credit?

You will need to let the DWP know that your rent has increased, if you don't let them know they will continue paying last year's rent amount.

- ▶ You can log into your UC account as normal via the UC website: www.gov.uk/sign-in-universal-credit
- ▶ Click on the 'To-do list' tab.
- ▶ Click on 'Report any changes to your housing costs' and provide the new charges for your property. You will have received a letter from us informing you of your new charges. If you are unsure, please contact your Income Officer who will be able to confirm the charges.
- ▶ When you have completed the 'to-do' there should be an entry in your journal confirming this.

Please complete your rental increase via the to-do list and not from the 'report a change' tab.

Please only update your journal **AFTER** the date of the rent increase.

Do I need to do anything if I am receiving Housing Benefit?

If you are currently receiving Housing Benefit, you do not need to do anything. Your entitlement will be automatically updated. You will be informed of this.

What if Universal Credit or Housing Benefit doesn't cover the rent increase?

If your Universal Credit allowance doesn't cover the additional rent increase, you are responsible for paying the shortfall.

If you are worried about paying the shortfall, please contact our Money Matters team. We are here to help.

Other organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau may also be able to help you.

YOUR RENT PAYMENTS EXPLAINED



Do I have to adjust my Direct Debit or will you do this automatically for me?

You don't need to worry; your Direct Debit will be adjusted automatically by our Income team – you don't have to do anything.



I pay by standing order, do I have to adjust this with my bank?

Yes, you will need to adjust your standing order.

You will need to work out your updated payment amount based on your new rent and service charges.

If you would like help to work this out, please contact our Income team who will be happy to help you.



HOW TO PAY YOUR RENT



Our preferred payment method is by Direct Debit. You can set this up at myhomeonline. Alternatively you can download a form from our website www.emh.co.uk or call us on 0300 123 6000 to set one up over the phone.

Pay with your Tablet or Smartphone

You can now download an app to your tablet, PC, or smartphone from the app store.

Search for allpay and download the app. You will be able to set up a payment facility using your reference number from the allpay payment card together with your debit or credit card. For more information check out the allpay website at www.allpay.net/the_allpay_app

Pay at www.allpay.net

Pay online using your debit or credit card on the allpay website. You will need to follow the on-screen instructions and have your swipe card numbers to hand.

Pay with your allpay swipe card

This can be used anywhere you see these logos.



Pay via online banking

If you have access to your bank or building society account, you can choose to pay your rent using online banking. Quote our sort code: 20-25-93, account number: 10476021 and your customer reference number.

If you do not quote your customer reference number when setting up your payment, credit to your account will be delayed.

Pay by phone

Call us on 0300 123 6000 using our 24-hour automated payment line, using your debit or credit card, quoting your rent reference numbers from your allpay swipe card.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP YOU



National advice agencies	Telephone	Website
Citizens Advice	0800 144 8848	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Direct Help and Advice	Derby: 0133 228 7850 Ilkeston: 0115 930 0199	www.dhadvice.org
National Debtline	0808 808 4000	https://nationaldebtline.org
Gov.uk (Formerly Directgov)		www.gov.uk
StepChange (Free debt advice)	0800 138 1111	www.stepchange.org
PayPlan	0800 280 2816	www.payplan.com
Money Helper	0800 011 3797	www.moneyhelper.org.uk
Age UK	0800 678 1602	www.ageuk.org.uk
Shelter	0808 800 4444	www.shelter.org.uk
TaxAid	0345 120 3779	www.taxaid.org.uk

Welfare benefits advice	Telephone	Website
Universal Credit	0800 328 5644	www.gov.uk/universal-credit
Benefits Enquiry Line (DWP)	0800 169 0310	
Derbyshire Welfare Rights	0162 953 1535	www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/adult-care-and-wellbeing/benefits-debt-and-legal-matters/welfare-benefits/welfare-benefits.aspx
State Pension (DWP)	0800 731 0469	www.gov.uk/new-state-pension/how-to-claim
Pension Credit (DWP)	0800 991 234	www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim
Turn 2 Us	0808 802 2000	www.turn2us.org.uk
Tax Help for Older People	0130 848 8066	https://taxvol.org.uk/

WAYS TO CONTACT US



MONEY MATTERS

If your query is related to your rent account and you need support, please talk to our Money Matters team about your financial situation. You can email them on: moneymatters@emh.co.uk

If your query is related to service charges, please email: rentandservicechargequeries@emh.co.uk

Manage your account, report a repair and change your contact details online via: www.myhomeonline.org.uk



W: www.emh.co.uk
T: 0300 123 6000

