

# Service Charge Disputes: What You Need to Know

Every year, we review the service charges you pay, just like other social landlords. A service charge is a fee that covers the cost of maintaining and looking after the communal areas of your building and estate. The amount you pay depends on where you live and the size of your home.

We've already sent you a letter about this year's increase in service charges. If you're unhappy with the new amount and want to challenge it, here's what you can do.

## What is a Dispute?

A dispute is when you think your service charge is wrong because:

- You've been charged for services you didn't receive.
- The quality of work done isn't good enough.
- The increase isn't fair or allowed under your agreement.
- You believe we didn't consult you properly.

## What Happens if You Dispute Your Charges?

First, you need to officially tell us that you're disputing the charge. Explain what the issue is, why you think you've been overcharged, or why you believe you've been charged for something you didn't get. Also, tell us how you'd like the problem resolved.

We'll assign an officer to look into your dispute. They might arrange a meeting with you and inspect your home, building, or estate.

We aim to complete the investigation within 20 days. If the case is complicated and takes longer, we'll let you know.

When we finish the investigation, we'll tell you if your dispute has been fully, partly, or not upheld. If it's upheld or partly upheld, we'll explain why and arrange a credit or refund if needed.

If we don't uphold your dispute and you're still unhappy, you can take your case to the First-tier Tribunal. This is an independent body set up by the government to help with disputes about things like:

- Whether service charges are fair.
- Assessing rent levels, including fixed service charges.
- Management issues and charges.
- Deciding if charges are due, and how much.

## **You can also get advice from the Leasehold Advisory Service**

If you've gone through our process and are still unhappy with our decision, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to investigate. The Ombudsman won't look into issues that the First-tier Tribunal deals with or the amount of your service charge increase. However, they might investigate if they think we haven't followed the law, proper procedures, or good practices, or if we've acted unreasonably.

**For more information, please  
contact our Customer Service  
Team on 0207 501 6120.  
You can also email us at  
[customerservice@h4w.co.uk](mailto:customerservice@h4w.co.uk).**