



# Understanding your rent review

Understanding your annual rent review	p2
How has my rent been calculated?	p3
Service Charges	p7
How can I pay my rent?	p9
Frequently Asked Questions	p10
Getting help with debt	p13
Useful contacts	p14



## Understanding your annual rent review

In September 2019, the government introduced a new 5 year policy for social housing rent increases.

This means that from April 2020, most social housing rents will increase by CPI+1% of the existing rent each year until April 2025.

The increase will apply to the rent element of your total rent charge and not the service charge or personal charges.

### What is CPI?

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a figure used to measure inflation.

The previous September's CPI is used to calculate rent increases. In September 2019, CPI was 1.7%.

Therefore your rent this year will increase by 2.7% (1.7% + 1%).


# How has my rent been calculated?

We calculate your rent review in different ways which depends on the type of rent that you pay. You will be able to see your rent type on your annual rent review letter.

## Assured Rent

If you pay an assured rent, the total amount you pay is made up of rent, service charges and/or personal charges. The rent increase will never go above the formula rent or social rent cap for your home, which is based on things like average earnings and the value of the property.

The 2.7% increase will be applied to your rent. Service charges and personal charges are not included in the calculation of the new rent.



Example calculation	Before	Annual review	After
Rent	£150.00	+ 2.7% = £4.05	£154.05
Service Charge	£ 20.00	+ 2% = £0.40	£ 20.40
Personal Charge	£ 10.00	+ 1% = £0.10	£ 10.10
<b>Total Weekly Rent</b>	<b>£180.00</b>	<b>Increase £4.55</b>	<b>£184.55</b>


The example above is only for illustration purposes. Your actual weekly rent and service charge may be different.

## Affordable rent

If you pay an affordable rent, the total amount you pay is made up of rent and service charges.

Your initial rent will not exceed 80% of the market rent for your property and will increase by no more than CPI +1% of your existing rent until your tenancy is reassessed at the end of the fixed term period.

The 2.7% increase is applied to your gross rent (that is rent plus service charges) and the service charges are then deducted to give the new rent. The personal charges are not included in the calculation of your new rent.



Example calculation	Before	Annual review	After
Total Amount Payable	£180.00	+ 2.7% = £4.86	£184.86
Rent	£150.00		£154.26
Service Charge	£ 30.00	+ 2 %	£ 30.60

The example above is only for illustration purposes. Your actual weekly rent and service charge may be different.

## Secure tenant on fair rent

The maximum fair rent we can charge on your home is the lowest of either the formula rent or at a level set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

The formula rent is calculated every year for your property and is based on things like average earnings and the value of the property.

Every two years we ask the VOA to review the maximum rent level for your property. Your rent will increase on the anniversary of the last rent increase, by a maximum of CPI +1% of your existing rent, and we will never charge you more than the maximum rent level we have on record for your home.

For more information you can contact the VOA by telephoning 0300 0501 501.



Example calculation	Before	Annual review	After
Rent	£150.00	+ 2.7% = £4.05	£154.05
Service Charge	£ 20.00	+ 2% = £0.40	£ 20.40
Total Weekly Rent	£170.00	Increase £4.45	£174.45

The example above is only for illustration purposes. Your actual weekly rent and service charge may be different.


# London Affordable rent

London Affordable Rents are set according to benchmarks published each year by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and are exclusive of any applicable service charges.

The rent levels reflect the formula rent cap figures for social rent properties and act as a ceiling for the maximum rent that can be charged for your property.

If you have a London Affordable rent type, the 2.7% increase will be applied to your rent.

Service charges are not included in the calculation of the new rent.



Example calculation	Before	Annual review	After
Rent	£150.00	+ 2.7% = £4.05	£154.05
Service Charge	£ 20.00	+ 2% = £0.40	£ 20.40
Total Weekly Rent	£170.00	Increase £4.45	£174.45

The example above is only for illustration purposes. Your actual weekly rent and service charge may be different.

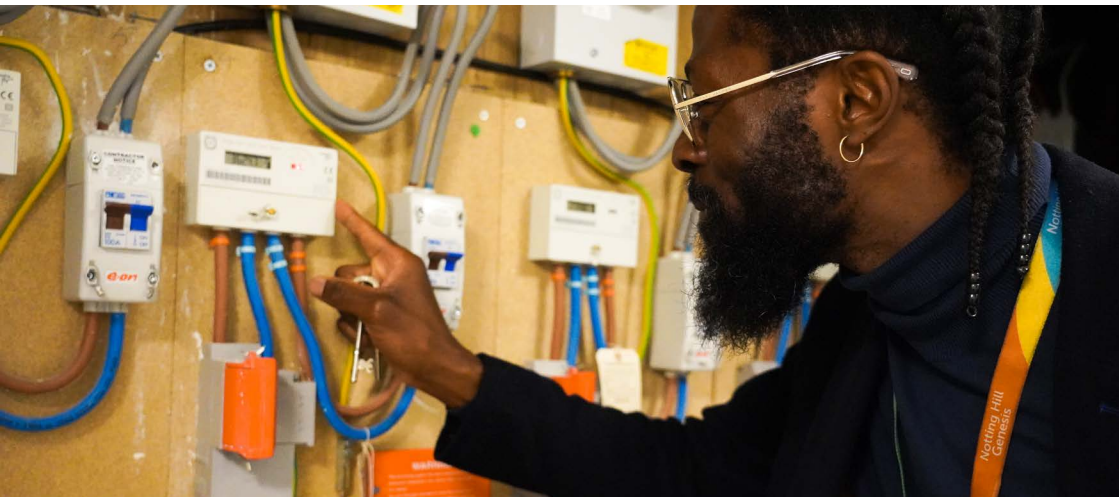
# Service Charges

We sometimes provide extra services to tenants, particularly in larger blocks of flats, on estates or in sheltered housing schemes.

Examples of these services include cleaning of shared areas, lift maintenance, caretakers, scheme managers, sheltered scheme coordinators or night managers.

These charges are reviewed every year to enable us to recover what we expect the services to cost and may go up or down. If you pay a variable service charge, your rent review notice may include details of any previous year balance adjustment.

If your service charge increases, the total amount you pay may increase if it is charged in addition to your rent. Service charge increases are not calculated using CPI, the increase isn't limited to inflation and can increase based on change in contracts or service need.



You will have a detailed breakdown of these charges in your rent notice every year however if you have any queries please contact your Housing Officer who will be able to advise you further.

## **I also pay personal charges – what are these for?**

Personal charges are paid in addition to service charges. These relate to water, gas and electricity usage for individual flats, meal charges, community alarm systems, Council Tax, or any other services provided to you personally as opposed to communal services.

## **My tenancy agreement states that I also pay furniture charges – what are these?**

If you pay a furniture charge, this is because you chose to have a “furnished tenancy” when you moved into your home; this means Notting Hill Genesis provided you with furniture and you pay a charge each week.

Notting Hill Genesis no longer offers furnished tenancies to all customers, only those living in supported housing.

If you have any questions about your furniture charge speak to your housing officer.



# How can I pay my rent?

## Our online account

You can now pay your rent and manage your home using our online account. To register go to [www.nhhg.org.uk/my-account](http://www.nhhg.org.uk/my-account). You will need your payment reference number, which can be found on any correspondence you have received from us, and the last name and date of birth of the registered tenant or leaseholder. For help registering go to [myaccounthelp@nhg.org.uk](mailto:myaccounthelp@nhg.org.uk)



## Direct Debit

A Direct Debit is an instruction that you give your bank or building society to deduct a payment of a specific amount from your account.

When you set up a Direct Debit with Notting Hill Genesis, it means that your rent comes out of your bank account automatically, on a date that suits you. Your Direct Debit is also protected by the Direct Debit guarantee.

To set up a Direct Debit, you will need to have a bank account. You can either set up your Direct Debit online or your housing officer will help you set it up over the phone.

If you are not able to pay your rent by Direct Debit right now then please contact your housing officer to set up an alternative payment method. Our expectation is that most people will pay their rent by Direct Debit as this is the simplest way.

We can help you to prepare for Direct Debit, such as helping you set up a bank account or putting you in touch with debt advice.

# Frequently Asked Questions



**I am on Housing Benefit – what do I need to do?**



You must **immediately** tell your local council Housing Benefit office about your rent change before the change takes effect.

You can do this by taking the rent notification letter to your benefits office.



**I am on Universal Credit – what do I need to do?**



You must inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as soon as possible **after** your rent change has taken effect. You cannot report the change before it has happened.

You can do this by reporting a change of circumstances in your Universal Credit account.

It is important to report the change as soon as possible after it has taken effect, otherwise you might miss out on payments.



## What happens to my rent if I move?



If you choose to move to another property, you will pay the advertised rent for that property. This information will be included in the advert. Please contact your housing officer for more information on transfers or mutual exchanges.



## Can I appeal against my rent review?



You can appeal to NHG by contacting your housing officer if you think we have calculated your rent incorrectly.

If an increase to your service charge results in you paying a higher rent than last year, you can appeal formally to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). The appeal cannot be considered against the formula rent level or be based on your personal or financial circumstances. A formal appeal must be raised before the start date of your new rent. This date still applies even if you appeal directly to us first, so please be sure to appeal formally before this date if you feel the need to - even if you have also appealed to NHG.



## What happens if I don't pay my rent?



### ***Paying your rent is a priority and your responsibility.***

As part of our new ways of working we've introduced a system that will automatically notify you if your rent account has fallen into arrears and an expected payment has not been made. To make the process of paying your rent easier, our notifications will also provide a link for you to register with the new online account as well as the contact details for your housing officer. This new service allows us to notify you about any debt more quickly than we're able to at present and will reduce the chance of your rent arrears reaching a point at which they cannot be cleared.

Missing rent payments could mean you risk losing your home and may also lead to the following problems:

- A court order can affect your credit rating and your ability to borrow money
- You will have to pay the cost of any court hearing
- We will not allow you to transfer or mutually exchange
- If you lose your home your local council may refuse to re-house you on the grounds that you have made yourself "intentionally homeless"
- You will still have to repay the arrears even after you have left

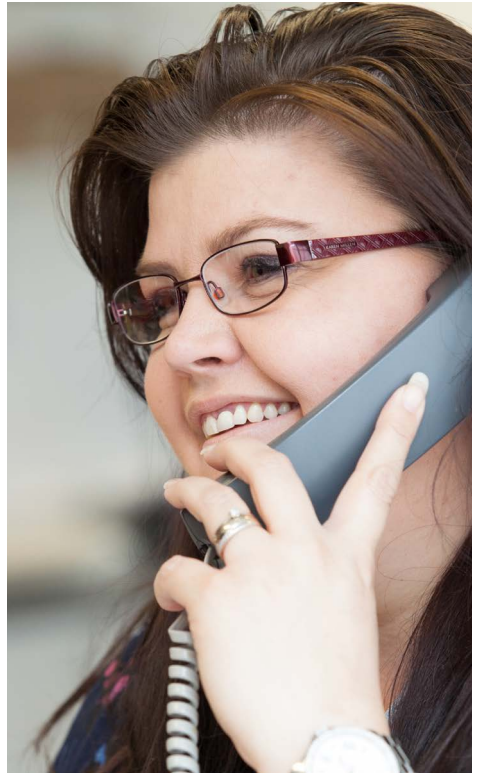
# Getting help with debt

Many of us have found ourselves in debt and experienced the emotional pressure it can cause. If you have a debt problem it's important not to panic, but you can't ignore it either – it won't go away.

**If you find yourself unable to pay your rent on the due dates, you should contact your housing officer as soon as you can.**

They will be able to help with alternative payment arrangements and may be able to suggest who you can contact to claim any benefits you might be entitled to.

The government is making changes to the way benefits are calculated and received, and some changes have happened already. To find out more, contact your housing officer.



The Citizens Advice Bureau offers free, confidential and impartial advice on dealing with debt and budgeting. For more info visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or call 03 444 111 444.



## Useful contacts

**Department for Work and Pensions** Tel: 0800 731 0469  
[www.gov.uk/dwp](http://www.gov.uk/dwp)

**Tax credits** Tel: 0345 300 3900  
[www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/tax-credits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/tax-credits)

**Disability benefits** Tel: 0800 121 4433  
[www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/disability](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/disability)

**Pension Credit claim line** Tel: 0800 731 7898  
[www.thepensionservice.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk)

**EntitledTo** Calculator to work out your entitlement to benefits and tax credits  
[www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk)

**First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)** Tel: 0207 446 7700  
[www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber](http://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber)

**National Debtline** Tel: 0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

**Notting Hill Genesis**

020 3815 0000

[info@nhg.org.uk](mailto:info@nhg.org.uk)

[www.nhgggroup.org.uk](http://www.nhgggroup.org.uk)