

Service Charges



**Your service charge explained:
what you get for your money**

Service charges

All tenants pay rent on their homes. However, some tenants have extra services and pay a charge for them. These can include the following:

- Landscaping communal (shared) area
- Cleaning communal hallways in flats
- Warden call alarms for the elderly or disabled
- Fire alarms, emergency lighting, door intercoms
- Shared lighting for hallways or car parks
- Shared water rates
- Maintenance and servicing of lifts

Service charges are **cost-based**. This means that you only pay for what you get. If we manage to save money on your services (e.g. we get a cheaper contractor) your service charge will cost less the following year. However, if we have to spend more than we expect (e.g. our landscapers had to do extra visits) your charge will go up.

If you pay a service charge, we will tell you when you move in. It changes every year at the same time as your rent (the first Monday in April). We will write to give you a month's notice of the change, telling you exactly which services you get and what they cost.

Emergency call system service

Some of our homes have an extra supported service - **an emergency call system**. We only have this service in homes that have been specifically developed for elderly or disabled people.

If you have to pay for this service, this is what you pay for:

- The phone line connecting the emergency call system to the call centre
- The weekly charge for the call centre to the monitor scheme (24 hour cover)
- Annual maintenance, servicing and repairs to the emergency call system
- An administration charge

Landscaping service

You pay a charge for landscaping if Unity owns land where you live and you share it with other residents. This can include lawns, shrubs, laundry areas or communal car parks.

If you have this service, this is what you pay for:

- **Grass cutting:** every two weeks, April - October
- **Litter picking:** every two weeks
- **Pruning and hedge cutting:** at least twice a year, more if necessary
- **Weeds:** all beds should be kept free of weeds. The landscapers spray weed killer when necessary.
- **Leaf clearing:** at least five times a year in autumn and winter

One size does not fit all. We want to work with our residents to offer a tailor-made service that fits your area. For instance, if you have a privet hedge next to your path, they need cutting more often.

If you have any suggestions, please talk to our landscapers or contact our **Resident Involvement Officer**.



You may be able to reduce your service charge for landscaping if you volunteer to look after a landscaped area yourself. You should speak to us if you wish to do this.

Door intercoms

If you live in a flat and have a door intercom, you pay a service charge to cover the cost of repairing the system and replacing it when it gets old. There is also a small administration charge.

Shared electricity bills

If you share a hallway or car park with wall lights, you will share the cost of the electricity to pay for this. Your service charge covers the actual cost of the electricity, plus a small administration charge.

Fire alarms and emergency lighting

By law, we have to have these in developments that have flats or shared hallways. We pay a contractor to inspect, test and service them for us, to keep our tenants safe. This is what they do:

- **Weekly:** inspection and manual testing of the fire alarm, updating log book,
- **Monthly:** inspection and manual testing of emergency lights

Your service charge also covers an administration charge and pays into a 'sinking fund' which is used to pay for replacing your fire alarms and emergency lighting when they get old or door entry systems.

Cleaning service

You can help us by becoming a cleaning monitor. We will regularly give you freepost cards for you to send back to tell us how good the service is.

If you live in a flat and share a hallway with other tenants, you pay a charge for cleaning the hallways. The cleaners come every week and this is what they do:

Problems understanding?

If you need any of our information translating or if you need an interpreter, please contact us. We can also provide this information in large print or on CD if you need us to.

- Vacuum all carpets and carpeted stairs
- Spot clean spillages and stains
- Sweep / vacuum and mop all hard floors
- Sweep and clear rubbish on communal entrance steps
- Remove all litter
- Wash down walls
- Clean treads and risers on stairs
- Remove finger marks from internal partitions and light switches
- Wipe (up to 2m high) all ledges, skirting boards, radiators, window sills, picture frames, handrails, banisters and fire extinguishers
- Check all light fittings and change bulbs, tubes or starters if necessary
- Report any , broken light fittings fire alarms sounding, broken electrical sockets or drug-users syringes

Monthly

- Clean vinyl floors with a buffing machine
- Clean all communal windows inside and out

Yearly

- 'Deep clean' in the communal area

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