

RENT INCREASE 2023-24



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Your rent and service charges are reviewed annually. The government confirmed in its Autumn Statement on 17th November 2022 that housing associations such as EPIC would be able to raise rents by up to 7% in 2023/24. Normally rents would have risen by 11.1% (CPI + 1%) – but this will be capped at 7% for the year 2023-24.

We believe that to continue to deliver the good quality services you expect, we need to maximise the money we receive from rents and apply the full increase of 7%. The money we get from our rents is a major source of income. It pays for the services we deliver and the investments we make in our homes.

What is CPI?

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used as a measure of inflation in the UK, it measures the average change from month to month of prices for goods and services purchased by households. High rates of CPI indicate cost of living increases, which is why this year the government has decided to cap rents.

Do you have to increase my rent?

Like organisations across the country, EPIC has been hit by rising costs, for example to contractor costs and materials. If we keep everyone's rent as it is, we would have to make some difficult choices about the services we deliver - invest less in existing homes, or do less in your neighbourhoods - and we don't think this would be fair.

Whilst we don't have to increase your rent, not doing so makes it very difficult to maintain services such as repairs, maintenance, and improvements. This is in addition to management and support services. You can learn more about how your money was spent in 2021-22 in our Tenant Annual Report.

When will my rent increase?

The increase will take effect from 3rd April 2023 with a weekly tenancy or 1st April for those tenants with a monthly tenancy.

I pay a service charge, do the same increases apply?

We have made the decision to freeze service charges again this year. Over the next year we will be carrying out a comprehensive review of our service charges to ensure they are providing good value for money for customers.

What will you spend the additional rental income on?

The income raised through rent charges will ensure that we can continue to provide the current services that we do. EPIC, like many others in the sector, have had increases in contractor costs and materials of 9.7%. The income through increased rent charges will help to ensure that we can continue with the maintenance of all homes. As part of the 2023/24 budgeting process we will be also be exploring the establishment of a community fund from which all residents can make an application. The details are yet to be finalised and we will be sharing those in due course.

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

Our priority is to support tenants to remain in their homes. If you have any concerns about being able to afford the increase, please email us at rents@epichousing.co.uk or ring 01782 252575. We can offer some budgeting advice and signpost you to

organisations that can help you in meeting rising living costs. We can also set up an affordable payment plan to clear any rent arrears.

What if I disagree with the rent increase?

The rent increase has been set in accordance with government guidance and has been approved by our Board. The rent is set by a regulated formula and is dependent on your home's property-type and location. For further information please read the rent increase notice you have received.

To make a complaint about any of our services please:

- visit www.epichousing.co.uk/manage-my-home/feedback-form
- email us at mailbox@epichousing.co.uk
- call us on 01782 252575.

I claim Universal Credit (UC)*: what do I need to do?

It is important that you notify the DWP of your new rent (including any service charge) on, or as soon after, the 3rd April 2023 as possible. Please note that any service charge for communal garden maintenance is 'eligible' for Universal Credit.

My rent is paid by Housing Benefit (HB)*: do I need to do anything?

If you claim Housing Benefit with Stoke-on-Trent Council and this is paid directly to EPIC, we will inform the Council of the new rent on your behalf.

*If there is any shortfall between your rent and your UC or HB entitlement you may be eligible for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). To apply for this contact your local authority. For further information email us at rents@epichousing.co.uk or ring 01782 252575.

What if I pay my rent via Standing Order?

If you pay by standing order you will need to notify your bank to adjust your payments.

Where can I get debt advice from?

The following organisations offer FREE advice and access to debt counselling:



www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money

Debt helpline: 0800 144 8848



www.stepchange.org

Call: 0800 138 1111



www.nationaldebtline.org

Call: 0808 808 4000