



Changes To Your Rent from April 2024

Your rent and service charges are reviewed annually. In January this year, the Regulator of Social Housing announced that housing associations, such as EPIC Housing, will be able to raise rents by the rate of CPI inflation last September (which was 6.7%) plus an additional 1%. This means rents for social housing properties can increase by 7.7%.

We believe that to continue to deliver the good quality services you expect and to invest in your homes, we need to maximise the money we receive from rents and apply the full increase of 7.7%. The money we get from our rents is by far our largest source of income. It pays for the services we deliver and the investments we make in your homes and communities.

Frequently Asked Questions

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.

Does EPIC Housing have to increase my rent?

Like many organisations across the country, EPIC Housing has been affected by rising costs, such as contractor costs and materials. If we did not increase our rents by the amount set by the government, we would have to make some difficult choices about the services we deliver, for example, having to invest less in your homes and neighbourhoods - and we don't think this would be fair to our tenants as a whole.

When will my rent increase?

The increase will take effect from Monday 1 April 2024 for both weekly and monthly tenancies.

I pay a service charge, do the same increases apply? We have made the decision to freeze existing service charges again this year.

For tenants living in our 'six-blocks' (flats with a shared communal hallway) in the Bentilee area, following a period of consultation, we will be introducing an additional service charge to help cover the cost of providing the communal lighting. Since the formation of EPIC Housing in 1998, we have resisted applying any additional charges, however, this is no longer viable. Normally we would be asking the relevant tenants to pay an additional charge of £2.35 per week, but from April 2024 to March 2025, we will be passing on 75% of the cost, so the amount payable will be only £1.77 per week. With effect from 1 April 2025, the full amount will be payable.

What will you spend the additional rental income on?

The income raised through the rent charges will ensure that we can continue to provide the current services that we do. EPIC Housing, like many other housing associations, have had increases in contractor costs and materials of around 10%. The income through increased rent charges will help ensure that we can continue with the repairs and maintenance of all our homes.

As part of our budget for 2024-25, we will be continuing to run our Tenancy Sustainment Fund which can help tenants with urgent, one-off expenses to help keep them safe and well in their homes. Since April last year, we have spent almost £10,000 on such things as helping tenants access important household furniture, paying for children's clothes, and helping tenants with increased fuel bills.

What can I do if I can't afford the increase and I'm struggling with the cost of living?

Our priority is to support tenants to stay in their homes. If you have any concerns about being able to afford the increase, please email us at rents@epichousing.co.uk or call 01782 252575. We can offer 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 line with government guidance and has been approved by our Board. The rent is set by a regulated formula based 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 as possible after, the 1 April 2024. Please note that any service charge for communal garden maintenance and communal lighting 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 Housing, 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 call 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

53-Week Financial Year – What It Means for You

There will be 53 Mondays in the 2024/25 financial year, which runs from 1 April 2024 until 1 April 2025, with the last Monday on 31 March 2025.

This happens every five or six years, because there are 365 days in a year or 366 in a leap year, which breaks down to 52 weeks in a year plus 1 day, or in a leap year 52 weeks plus 2 days. These extra days accumulate to add an extra week to the year.

What does this mean for me?

If you pay your rent weekly, there will be an extra week of rent to pay.

Who does it affect?

This will impact any of our tenants who are on a weekly tenancy agreement.

If you receive Universal Credit, the Department for Work and Pensions will NOT cover the extra week of rent – you will need to pay it.

However, if you are on Housing Benefits (HB, legacy benefits) you will not be impacted by this, as HB will cover this as they pay every week that it is charged.

What do I need to do if I am on Universal Credit?

The DWP only pay up to 52 weeks of rent per year and works out the weekly rent for those on Universal Credit by taking the total yearly amount and dividing it by 52 weeks. For example, £5,200 per year/52 weeks = £100pw rent.

Unfortunately, they have confirmed that they won't pay for the 53rd week. This means you will need to pay for the additional week yourself.

To lessen the impact, we recommend you pay a little bit each week over the year. For example, if you pay £100 a week for your rent, you could divide this by 53 weeks and pay £1.89 a week for 53 weeks.

I pay my rent every four weeks, not weekly, what do I need to?

If you pay your rent every four weeks, you will need to multiply your weekly rent by 53 then divide it over 13 payments.

e.g £100 weekly rent x 53 = £5,300/13 = £407.70 rent payment, every four weeks.

If you pay by standing order every four weeks - You'll need to change the amount you pay through your bank at the beginning of the new financial year if you want to split the costs of 13 payments.