

### **How are social housing rents set?**

Rents are set when you first move into your home. The way we calculate these is set by the government and is based on property value, number of bedrooms and average earnings for Birmingham.

### **Why has inflation affected my rent?**

Inflation measures how prices for goods and services change over time, based on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). Each September, the CPI is used to set the limit on rent increases for social housing.

In September 2024, CPI was 1.7%. Following the Rent Standard, this means rents will increase by 2.7%.

### **Will service charges also be increasing?**

Service charges are adjusted annually to reflect the cost of providing services. Some costs have increased due to changes like the National Minimum Wage and Employer's National Insurance, meaning higher payments to some suppliers. However, we've also negotiated better terms with some suppliers, reducing charges.

We don't make a profit from service charges; the amount you pay covers the true cost of the services provided.

### **Will garage rents also be increasing?**

Yes, garage rents will increase by £0.50 per week, which means they will remain well below the rent charged by others, such as Birmingham City Council.

### **I live in a market rent property, will my rent be increasing?**

Market rent reviews are based on the local housing market. We compare our current rents with those of similar properties in the area. While we aim to charge market rates, we understand the cost of living is high, so we've decided to cap rent increases at £80 per month, even if your current rent is below market rate.

If you're having difficulty meeting your rent, you may be eligible for social housing. Contact us to discuss your options.

### **I live in a rent to buy property, will my rent be increasing?**

For rent to buy properties, rent will be increasing using the same rules as social housing. This means rents will increase by 2.7%.

### **I live in a shared ownership property, will my rent be increasing?**

Rents are increased in line with the terms of your lease which means they will increase by 3.2% this year.

### **I live in shared accommodation in Stockland Green, will my rent be increasing?**

Yes, we have taken the decision to increase rents in these homes. This is to help meet the increased costs of gas, electricity, water, council tax and other items over recent years.

### **Could you make savings to lower rents?**

We constantly review our services to ensure they provide value for money and to reduce costs where possible. While we've reduced some service charges, we have no control over rising energy costs.

If we don't find ways to increase our income, we may have to cut services, which would affect the support many residents rely on and value.

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

We're here to support you if you're worried about paying your rent. Contact us as soon as possible to discuss options like employment support, benefit advice, debt management, or immediate assistance.

You don't need to be in arrears to access our help, and the sooner you reach out, the sooner we can work with you to find a solution.

If payments are missed, we may need to contact you to discuss the situation. If you don't work with us, this could lead to court proceedings for breaching your tenancy agreement.

### **My rent is too high. What can I do?**

We understand rent can be a significant cost for families. When reviewing rents, we carefully consider the impact on our tenants.

The government has increased allowances for Housing Benefits and Universal Credit, so it's worth checking if you're eligible for extra support. Use the benefits calculator at [www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk](http://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk) to see what you could claim.

Residents also have access to free money advice through Spitfire Services, which offers help with benefits, budgeting, debt management, and more.

If you're struggling with your new charges, call us. We have funds available to assist those affected, but you must apply. We can send you an application form if needed.

### **I have received my rent letter but my rent is paid by housing benefits. Do I need to do anything?**

If your Housing Benefit is paid directly to us, we'll inform Birmingham City Council of your new rent amount. However, it's your responsibility to ensure your claim is accurate. If you haven't received an update from the council within four weeks, contact them to check.

If you receive Housing Benefit payments directly, you'll need to inform the council of your new rent amount.

### **I have lost/haven't received my rent letter. What do I do?**

Contact our team as soon as possible if you need a copy of your rent review letter. You can contact our team on [contactus@pioneergroup.org.uk](mailto:contactus@pioneergroup.org.uk) or 0121 718 8100.

### **Can I withhold my rent if I am unhappy with a service?**

If something goes wrong, we encourage you to contact us so we can resolve it quickly. Most issues are addressed as soon as they are reported.

For more formal concerns, we have a simple complaints procedure, which you can find at [www.pioneergroup.org.uk/complaints-procedure](http://www.pioneergroup.org.uk/complaints-procedure) or by requesting a leaflet.

It's important not to withhold your rent, this would breach your tenancy agreement. If you're unhappy with a service, please talk to us, and we'll work to put things right.