

RENT CHANGES 1ST APRIL 2024

In February, every tenant or shared owner will have received a letter from us outlining what the new rent will be from April 2024. This letter provided all individual information and explained what tenants need to do if they are in receipt of benefits.

We are working to keep rents as affordable as possible for tenants. From April 2024, following careful planning and in line with the Government's legislation, we will be increasing our rents. The rate of increase depends on the type of accommodation is provided.

We have given the rent increase a lot of thought and have discussed the issue with our Board. To deliver our commitments as set out in our business plan, we need to maximise the money we receive from rents and apply the increases so that we can meet our rising costs.

The additional rent will allow us to continue investment in our 1,200+ existing homes, and make your homes more energy efficient.

What do I need to do to?

What you need to do depends on your circumstances and how you pay your rent. This might be through your Universal Credit, by Standing Order, Direct Debit or via Housing Benefit.

Full details can be found in the FAQ section below.

Q: I'm struggling to pay my rent, what should I do?

If you're struggling to pay your rent or anticipate that the rent increase will cause you to fall into arrears, please don't let the problem get out of control. **Contact your Housing Officer on 0161 272 6094 or speak to your Scheme Manager.** They will be able to help you make a plan to keep on top of your rent, can provide benefits advice, and can also point you in the direction of further sources of support, such as utility guidance, debt and money advice services and foodbank provision, to help you make the most of your money.

Ways to pay your rent:

By Phone - 0161 272 6094 - Option 1 (24 hours a day)

All other ways to pay, please visit - <https://arawakwalton.com/payment-options/>

To find all the help and support available to Manchester residents, please visit the councils helping hands website here [Help with the cost of living crisis | Manchester City Council](#)

Further advice can also be found on the below websites:

[Citizens Advice Drop-in Sessions – Longsight Digital Hub | Help & Support Manchester](#)
www.manchestermind.org/benefits-debt-housing/

[Money Advice: How To Maximise Your Income. StepChange](#)

[Cheetham Hill Advice Centre – Services \(cheethamadvice.org.uk\)](http://cheethamadvice.org.uk)

[Fighting UK Poverty – Turn2us](#)

Q: Why is my rent increasing?

As a not-for-profit organisation, the rent we collect goes directly back into repairing and maintaining homes to ensure they are safe and of good quality, funding vital services and support for tenants, and improving the energy efficiency of homes to reduce fuel bills and work towards zero-carbon targets.

Like every housing association, we review rents every year in line with inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). We have discussed with our Board how the additional money will be used e.g. investing in your home and delivering community investment activities. We will ensure that this money is re-invested back into homes and services and is spent sensibly and prudently to achieve the best value and deliver maximum benefits for our tenants and communities.

In 2024/25 we will spend over £1.4 million on the repairs and maintenance of our existing homes. We'll spend around £900,000 on investment works, including over £400k on new kitchens, £100k on window and door upgrades and over £100k installing new boilers. We're also investing in research to make our properties more eco-friendly and energy efficient, part of our long-term challenge to become a net zero carbon housing association by 2050.

We are still able to maintain some of the lowest rents across Greater Manchester, offering good quality affordable housing to those who need it most.

Q: Do you have to increase my rent?

We need to increase your rent, otherwise we simply can't deliver what we need to. The increase means we will be able to continue to invest in your home and local community, including making your homes more energy efficient through our de-carbonisation plans.

Our Board has agreed to increase rents in line with the government's rent formula and cap, to enable us to meet the increasing cost of maintaining homes, delivering services and investing in new and existing homes, now and into the future.

We always aim to keep rent as affordable as possible, but we need to balance this with the rising costs in areas such as maintaining and repairing homes and the goods and services we need to run our organisation

What do I need to do to stay in credit?

What you need to do depends on your circumstances and how you pay your rent. This might be through Universal Credit, by Standing Order, Direct Debit or via Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit

If you receive Universal Credit, it is your responsibility to notify the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of the changes to your rent and service charge if applicable.

To do this, follow the instructions below:

1. Log in to your online Universal Credit account
2. Tap on the 'To do' button
3. Complete the 'Confirm your housing costs' to do on the date shown below (do not use the 'change of circumstances' to report your rent increase)

This should be done by:

- 1 April 2024 for those that pay rent monthly
- 1 April 2024 for all other rent payment frequencies

If you don't do this, your housing costs will be underpaid, which will result in arrears on your rent account.

Standing Order

If you pay by standing order, you will need to contact your bank to change your standing order to reflect your new rent payments.

Direct Debit

If you pay by Direct Debit, we will contact you to amend your mandate. If we are unable to make contact, then we will amend it on your behalf. Alternatively, give us a call on 0161 272 6094 to speak to us about amending your Direct Debit payment.

Housing Benefit

If you receive housing benefit, you do not need to do anything as we will inform the Local Authority of the change.

I pay service charges - will the same increases apply?

Your service charge may increase but this will vary for each household as it will depend on what type of service charge you pay. Unfortunately, we have seen a number of costs increase over the past year and in particular gas and electricity prices are forecast to increase further over the next year.

Please be assured that we set service charges in line with our policy. Your rent letter will let you know how much your service charge will increase by.