

## **Fire Safety Services - Service Charge FAQs**

### **What should I do if I have a query with the proposed new service charges?**

A dedicated email address has been set up – [servicecharges@lyha.co.uk](mailto:servicecharges@lyha.co.uk). This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and we will provide responses to all queries. Feedback will be collated, and we will address any key themes when we write to tenants following the closure of the consultation process. The FAQ information will also be available on our website [www.lyha.co.uk](http://www.lyha.co.uk).

### **What is a “Block Inspection”?**

A block inspection is a health & safety inspection of the communal areas within a block of flats/apartments. If there is a fire alarm, we will carry out a fire call point test, as well as ensuring that fire doors and corridors are clear of obstructions and carry other fire safety inspections. Issues such as fly tipping, poor standards of cleanliness and communal repairs will also be picked up on the inspection.

### **Will Housing Benefit or Universal Credit pay for these services?**

Yes. These new services are eligible for both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

### **Please explain why these additional services are needed?**

Over the last year we have carried out a thorough review of fire safety in the communal areas of our buildings. We have carried out Fire Risk Assessments and introduced a range of improvements to increase tenants’ safety. In order to continually improve your safety LYHA now propose to introduce new weekly block inspections. Where new fire detection and warning equipment has been installed, we also need to carry out regular inspections and servicing of it. This may periodically include a requirement to gain access to tenants’ homes and we will provide prior notification of this.

### **If these new services are so important why weren’t they being delivered previously?**

At LYHA we aim to continually improve the quality of service and accommodation we offer. We have recently made significant investment in improving fire safety in our blocks. We believe introducing these new services is the appropriate next step to increase fire safety for tenants.

### **Who will be carrying out the block inspections?**

LYHA will expand our Estates team who will carry out the regular block inspections.

### **Why can't the current Estates team carry out the block inspections when they are on site?**

We feel that it is important that we have a dedicated resource to deliver this new service. The other members of the Estates team deliver cleaning and gardening services on a fortnightly basis. If implemented, we would carry out a review of the new service after a few months to check it is being delivered as effectively as possible.

### **Why do tenants need to pay for these new services?**

LYHA has paid for the costs of purchasing and installing new equipment to improve the safety of blocks. However, it is tenants' responsibility to pay for the servicing and inspection of equipment.

### **How have you calculated the costs of these new services?**

For the 2019/20 year, we have calculated your property's contribution to the service by taking the expected costs, such as servicing costs and salaries, plus overheads and splitting it by assessing the frequency and amount of time required over the course of the year at your block. This value is divided by the number of properties in the block that benefit from the service.

### **Why has LYHA sent details of all service charges in addition to the new charges?**

We felt it was important that tenants could see the impact of the new charges in the context of changes to existing service charges proposed for the coming year. We will be writing to all tenants again before April, as normal, to outline the service charges for 2019/20.

### **What is LYHA doing to ensure that these charges are affordable?**

In order to ensure that service charges are affordable, we will be capping any service charges that are increasing by more than £15 a month overall. This be reviewed again next year.

We have also reduced the Admin Charge from 12.5% to 10% to try to minimise any increases.

### **What if I am having problems paying my service charges?**

Contact your Income Officer immediately as we may be able to offer advice or payment terms to help. Do not ignore the problem as it will only get worse.

For further advice and support around debt and benefits, you can contact Citizens Advice Bureau: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)