


GUIDE TO RENTS, SERVICE CHARGES AND ARREARS





It is important that we collect rent and service charges because these fund the services we provide, such as day to day repairs and long term improvements.

Rent is what you are charged for living in one of our properties.

Service charges pay for services which may not be provided to everyone, or that may be for communal facilities rather than for a particular home such as Caretaking. Leaseholders pay service charges, and tenants may also need to pay them in addition to rent.

You can pay your rent and any service charge in the following ways:



Direct Debit

The easiest way to pay. You can choose to pay weekly or monthly on the 1st or 17th of the month and we will inform you if there are to be any changes. Direct Debit payments are covered by a guarantee. Collect or ask for a form from one of our offices or download from our website, fill it in and send it back to us.



Standing Order

Standing Orders allow you to pay by calendar month. Collect a form from any of our offices or download from our website, fill it in and send it back to us. We will calculate the monthly payments for you. Unlike Direct Debit, a Standing Order is an agreement between you and your bank therefore it is your responsibility to tell your bank about any changes.



PayPoint

Pay your rent over the counter at any outlet displaying the PayPoint logo, using your rent payment card. There are over 190 shops and offices in Leeds which offer this facility. You can find your nearest PayPoint outlet at www.paypoint.co.uk



Payzone

Over the counter at any outlet displaying the payzone logo, using your rent payment card. You can find your nearest payzone outlet at www.payzone.co.uk



Post Office

At any Post Office using your rent payment card.



Telephone

If you have a debit card, call **0800 915 6660** and we will accept your payment over the phone. Make sure you have your rent payment card handy, as you will be asked for your nine digit rent account number. If the card is not in your name then please ensure that the card holder is present or we will not be able to accept the payment.



Internet

www.leeds.gov.uk/epayments

Leeds City Council have an online payments service. You can use it to make safe and secure payments for your rent, Council Tax, and other council invoices for things like school meals or residential care fees. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and it's very simple to use.



Leeds City Credit Union

You can also make payments through Leeds City Credit Union. For details call 0113 214 5252 or go to www.leedscitycreditunion.co.uk



Salary or Wage Deduction

Employees of Leeds City Council or its Companies can have rent deducted direct from their salary or wage. Please telephone 0113 247 6192 to arrange.

Housing Benefit

You may be able to get help with your rent payments from Housing Benefit. If you think you are entitled to Housing Benefit it is your responsibility to complete an application form as soon as possible. Pick up a form from any of our offices, download from our website or contact us on 0800 915 6660 and we will send one to you.

In accordance with the Tenancy Agreement payment of rent and service charges is due every Monday and in advance. However, we understand that there may be times when our customers have financial problems. When this happens we will be sensitive and understanding taking account of the individuals circumstances. We will provide appropriate advice and assistance.

Rents and Service Charges Service Standards:

What should you expect?

We will:

- inform you before the commencement of a new rent year (April to April) of what your rent and other charges will be;
- send you a rent statement 4 times a year;
- give you at least 4 weeks notice of any increase to the rent or other charges that you pay;
- if you ask us, assist you to claim Housing Benefit. However, it is your responsibility to make a claim if you think you are entitled;
- employ staff skilled in handling rents, service charge and arrears enquiries including Benefit Advisors; and
- issue on request a rent payment card within three working days (for new tenants and if you lose your existing card).



We are responsible for the management of your home and estate. However, Leeds City Council is responsible for setting how much rent you have to pay. They work out the rent for each home by taking into account local earnings, property values and the size and condition of your property. For more information visit our website (www.avhleeds.org.uk)

If you fail to pay your rent and are in arrears we will:

- write to you within 2 weeks to inform you how much you owe and request a payment;
- write to you at every stage of the rent arrears procedure to notify you of how much you owe and what the next action will be;
- make efforts to contact you over the telephone or face to face at your home or in our offices to discuss arrears repayment;
- negotiate a suitable payment plan if you are unable to pay your arrears in full;
- notify you in writing within 2 weeks if you breach a payment plan and advise you of the action to be taken if the payment plan is not brought up to date;
- only recover costs that are reasonable;
- notify you of the Court Hearing Date if recovery of arrears through the County Court is required; and
- provide you with a copy of your rent account and a copy of the witness statement that we will have supplied to the County Court no later than 10 days before the Court Hearing.

As a Customer we expect you to:

- make payments on time;
- tell us promptly if you are unable to make a payment on time;

- tell us promptly about any changes to your circumstances such as a change to your income or a child leaving home;
- respond to our letters within the timescale quoted on the letter;
- if you are claiming Housing Benefit it is your responsibility to ensure your claim details are kept up to date and that you respond to any letters about your claim on time; and
- on request, provide us with details of your income and expenditure to enable us to negotiate suitable payment plans for arrears.

We understand you may have other debts in addition to rent arrears.

We will therefore:

- not make unreasonable requests for you to pay more than you can afford.
- provide you with details of debt advice agencies and the Local Citizens Advice Bureaux.

If you are unable to make payment of your rent or service charges, please contact us immediately on:

0800 915 6660

If you would like this information in any other format including large print, audio CD/tape, Braille or translated into another language please telephone **0113 214 1942** and speak to the Equality Officer.



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