



Rent Restructuring Frequently Asked Questions February 2018

1. Why is Partick Housing Association looking to restructure its rents?

Partick Housing Association (PHA) owns and manages over 1,700 social rented properties. Our last Customer Satisfaction Survey reported that 91% of tenants agreed that taking into account the accommodation and services that PHA provides, the rent for their property represented good value for money.

Every year we review our rent charges, but we have a mix of properties and a variety of rent charges. This can mean that tenants in similar properties can sometimes be paying different rent charges. We are therefore simplifying and streamlining how we set our rents and we call this process 'rent restructuring'.

Over the past year we have been working with our customers and our tenant led Scrutiny Panel to simplify our rents to ensure that what we charge across our housing stock is affordable, equitable, transparent, consistent and reasonable within the context of the setting of the social housing sector.

2. How will rent restructuring work?

We are introducing rent restructuring from 1 April 2018, but we will phase it in over the next five years or so.

It is important to be clear that rent restructuring will be a 'cost neutral' exercise. This means that the total amount of rent that PHA will generate will be the same as before, but individual rents will change – for some tenants their rent will go up, for some their rent will go down and others will have their rent stay broadly the same.

We set up a working group and consulted tenants during 2017 to consider which property characteristics we should use to set our rents in future and how these should be weighted using a simple points system to set the new 'target rent'.

We will not charge additional rent for new build, modernised/improved or adapted properties.

Similar properties will be charged similar rents, taking account of:

- Apartment size (i.e. properties with more bedrooms will be charged higher rents);
- Number of bedspaces (i.e. in the case of 1 and 2 apartment properties only, those properties with more bedspaces will be charged higher rents);
- Property type (i.e. houses will be charged higher rents than flats); and
- Property amenities (i.e. higher rents will be charged for properties that are main door flats; are serviced by a lift; benefit from a district heating system; benefit from designated resident parking; benefit from a garage; and/or benefit from a balcony).

3. How will I know how much rent I need to pay?

As well as working on rent restructuring, every year we review our rent levels to ensure that they reflect the current costs of running the business and are also affordable within the context of the economic environment and the social housing sector. During November and December 2017, we consulted tenants on our planned rent increase for 2018/19.

We have written to all PHA tenants during February 2018 setting out their new rent charge for 2018/19, which will apply from 1 April 2018. Some tenants will see their rent go up, for some their rent will go down and others will have their rent stay broadly the same. Tenants should alter their payments to cover the new rent charge.

4. What if I currently get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help with my rent?

For tenants who currently get help with their rent through Housing Benefit, we will tell the Council about your rent increase – you should receive an amended Housing Benefit award letter from them for information. If you currently pay part of your rent to the Association but get some Housing Benefit, you should continue to pay the same amount until we advise you of your new payment.

For tenants who receive Universal Credit, we will notify the DWP directly of the increase in your rent. You can contact your Housing Officer to discuss this matter further if you wish.

It is important that tenants who get Housing Benefit or Universal Credit let the Council/DWP know if there has been a change in your personal circumstances.

5. Who do I contact if I need more information or advice?

We are here to help. If you want to find out more about different methods of payment, any benefits entitlement or are struggling to pay your rent, please contact your Housing Officer on 0141 357 3773 or email info@partickha.org.uk

We also offer a free, confidential and independent money advice service through our Money Advice Officer, Stephen Lawson. Stephen can offer help and advice on all aspects of social security and tax credit benefits. If you would like to make an appointment to discuss your circumstances with Stephen, please contact him on 0141 330 1487 or email slawson@partickha.org.uk