

## Service Charge – disputes

A service charge is the payment residents have to make towards the cost of shared services and repairs in the areas that they share with their neighbours. The type of agreement you have, and the size of your home will determine what your share of the cost is.

There may be occasions when you feel that you should not have to pay all or some of your service charges and wish to dispute these with us.

You can normally only dispute your service charge once you have been billed your Actual Charge (the actual costs of maintaining your estate for the last 12 months, not the estimate)

### What is a dispute?

**A dispute is when you do not agree with your charges because:**

- You have been charged for a service you have not received
- The quality of the work carried out is not to an acceptable standard.
- The costs are not reasonable or payable under your agreement.
- We did not consult you correctly

### What happens if I dispute my charges?

Formally register your dispute, clearly setting out what it is about, how you believe you have been overcharged or charged for a service you have not received and how you would like it resolved.

An officer will be appointed to investigate your dispute. They may arrange to meet you and carry out an inspection of your property, block and/or estate.

We will try to complete our investigation in 28 days, though if it is complex or involves charges from a managing agent it may take longer. If this is the case we will let you know.

Once the investigation is complete, you will be advised on whether your dispute has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. If upheld or partially upheld we will explain what has happened and arrange a credit or refund if appropriate.

If we do not uphold your dispute and despite our explanation you remain unhappy you can make an [application to the First-tier Tribunal](#). The First-tier Tribunal is part of the courts and tribunals service and is an independent body set up by the government to assist in disputes. They deal with matters such as:

- Assessing whether service charges are reasonable.
- Assessing rent levels including fixed service charges.
- Management issues and charges.
- Determining whether charges are payable, and how much is payable.

You can also contact the Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE) for information and assistance on service charges on their website at [www.lease-advice.org](http://www.lease-advice.org)

You can also apply to the [Housing Ombudsman Service](#) to investigate your dispute if you have exhausted our investigation process and remain unhappy. They will not usually investigate issues that are dealt with by the First-tier Tribunal or concerns about the level service charges or the amount of service charge increase. They may investigate your complaint if we have failed to keep to the law, follow proper procedure or good practice or behaved in a reasonable and competent manner.