

# Our policy on Collecting rent and service charges

Our main source of income is the rents and service charges you pay. We rely on this money to provide you with a home and services. This policy explains how we work to maximise our income and minimise resident debt.

Our policy aims to maximise our income and minimise resident debt, by:

- making payment as easy as possible
- actively promoting good payment habits, and
- taking a firm but fair approach to rent arrears.

## Paying your rent

From the start of your tenancy, we will be clear about your payment responsibilities. We will expect you to bring your first week's rent to your sign-up meeting – or a token payment, if you are likely to get full Housing Benefit.

We will remind you throughout your tenancy that you must pay your rent in advance, on time, every time.

We will make this easier, by:

- giving you clear and timely information about how much you owe
- providing information in your own language if you need this, and
- providing a range of ways to pay.

You will be able to pay at a PayPoint outlet, by cheque or direct debit. Alternatively, you can use your debit or credit card to pay by phone, text message or online.

## Included in your rent

Depending on where you live and whether you rent or own your home, the rent you pay may also include items such as:

- a service charge
- charges for parking, or renting a garage or shed
- ground rent (leaseholders only)
- water rates or heating charges, and
- other amounts you owe (including for rechargeable repairs).

Be aware that if you owe us money, we may withdraw your parking permit or take back your shed or garage.



## Notice of legal action

After we send you a legal notice warning of court action, we will carry on trying to get you to make an arrangement.

If you fail to make or keep to a payment arrangement, we will apply for a court date and let you know. You can only stop this action by agreeing to start paying off what you owe.

## Possession order

The court can grant a possession order. This is usually suspended (put on hold) to give you time to pay in instalments. You will usually have court costs added to the total.

If you fail to pay, we will call you in for an interview. We will explain that we are about to apply to the court for a warrant to enforce the possession order. The final decision to go ahead is taken by the Head of Income and Lettings.

At this stage, if you have a history of regularly not paying your rent, we will apply to take back your home, even if you have no debt by the time it gets to court.

We will always ask for all our court costs to be added to the amount owed.

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### Payment orders

To enforce repayment, we will consider asking the court for:

- a money judgement – which forces you to repay what you owe
- an order for attachment of earnings – which instructs your employer to send the money direct from your wages
- a charging order – which would stop a home owner from selling their home before the debt is paid, or
- a garnishee order – which instructs another organisation (for example, your employer, bank or building society) to hand over the money owed.

We will not apply to seize your possessions.

### Small Claims Court

If you are up to date with your rent, but not clearing other debts – for example, for court costs or rechargeable repairs – we may opt to take you through the Small Claims Court instead.

### Transfers

Before transferring to another of our properties, we will normally expect you to pay what you owe first. However, our Head of Income and Lettings may allow the move to go ahead first if, for example:

- you are moving away from hate crime or domestic violence, or
- you have arrears due to the bedroom tax and you need a move to a smaller property.

### Former tenant arrears

If you are leaving your home, we will expect you to pay the rent you owe before you leave.

We use a debt recovery company to track down former tenants and collect outstanding payments.

### Suspicious credits

We also check for accounts that are in credit with more than three months' rent. We will refund anything over this amount.

We do this to prevent people from laundering money through our accounts. Laundering is when someone puts money gained illegally through a legal business.

*This leaflet provides a summary of our policy.*

**For more information** send a message through your 'My Corner' account, or email [customerservices@thch.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@thch.org.uk)