

## Rent Increase 2021 - FAQs

### I'm an Eastlight tenant. How much has my rent gone up by?

From 5 April 2021, your rent will increase by 1.5%. If you are a shared owner, the increase is 1.7%.

### Why has my rent gone up?

Every year inflation and the cost of providing services such as repairs and maintenance changes. Some of your rent increase covers this increase. The rest will go towards our investment plans, including new services and improvements to your homes.

This includes replacing approximately **428** heating systems, **181** bathrooms, **198** kitchens and **900** front doors. We plan to carry out **300** rewires and spend **£158,000** on aids and adaptations to help you stay independent in your home. We also plan to invest more than £1 million in our communities and build approximately **425** new homes in our districts for those who need them.

### How do you decide what the increase will be?

The increase is set in accordance with Government policy. For rented properties, this is CPI (Consumer Price Index) as at September 2020 plus 1%. For shared ownership, this is RPI (Retail Price Index) as at December 2020 plus 0.5%.

### My weekly rent has gone down, not up?

Previously your annual rent was charged over 48 weeks. From 5 April 2021, you will be charged over 52 weeks. If you pay weekly you will be paying a little less but will need to make 4 additional payments. Please refer to the letter we sent you in January advising of this change for more information.

### I pay service charges. Are these affected?

You will receive information about your service charges in your rent letter. They are intended to cover the cost of providing these services, and Eastlight does not make a profit on them.

### Is anyone consulted about these changes?

Yes. The Community Gateway Group, led by residents, have been consulted about the increase, while the Board has also supported the decision.

### **I receive Housing Benefit, what should I do?**

If your Housing Benefit is paid direct to Eastlight (as of February 2021) we will notify your local authority of the new charges. If your Housing Benefit is paid directly to you or you have only recently requested for it to be paid to us, you will need to supply a copy of your increase letter to them.

### **I receive Universal Credit, what should I do?**

You will need to logon to your journal on or after 5 April 2021 and update the housing costs element with figures from the Appendix at the end of your rent increase letter. If you currently live in a former Greenfields property you will also need to confirm the charge or charges apply for 52 weeks.

Eastlight do not have access to your journal, so we are unable to do this for you. Please ensure you enter the figures correctly, as future payments to you could be reduced if an error is identified.

Please do not update your journal with these changes before this date as they will be rejected.

### **When should I start paying the new charge?**

From Monday 5 April 2021.

### **I pay by Direct Debit - what happens next?**

You will receive a separate letter regarding your Rent Direct Debits.

We will recalculate your payment, and from April 2021, Allpay will commence collecting your payment on our behalf. Allpay will write to you to confirm the amount. Please refer to the letter we sent you in February for more information.

### **I pay monthly and don't know how much to pay?**

If you require assistance with calculating your new monthly payments, please call 01376 535400 and ask to speak to the Income Team.

### **I pay by standing order – will my payments change?**

You will need to advise your bank to amend your payments to cover the change in your charges. Eastlight are unable to amend this for you as we do not have access to your bank account.

### **My increase letter contains Form 4, why has this been included?**

When we increase your rent, we are required by law to send this form as part of the notification process for your tenancy.

### **How are my service charges calculated?**

If you are charged a social rent or are a shared owner, service charges are set at a level to recover the actual cost incurred in providing the service(s) for your home. Any increases have been limited to a maximum of RPI (Retail Price Index) plus £5 per week in total. If you are charged an affordable rent, service charges are included and increased in line with your rent. Eastlight does not make a profit on service charges.