

## Rent and service charges March 2024 – frequently asked questions for our tenants who are in receipt of communal heating

### Arabic

إذا كنت ترغب في التحدث إلينا بلغتك حول محتوى هذه الرسالة ، فيرجى الاتصال بمجلس مدينة ويستمنستر 0800358 3783 أو زيارة مركز الخدمة المحلي الخاص بك

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই চিঠির বিষয়বস্তু সম্পর্কে আপনার ভাষায় আমাদের সাথে কথা বলতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে ওয়েস্টমিনস্টার সিটি কাউন্সিলের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন (0800 358 3783) অথবা আপনার স্থানীয় পিআর অফিসে যান

### Portuguese

Se desejar falar conosco sobre o conteúdo desta carta no seu idioma, entre em contacto com a Westminster City Council através do número 0800 358 3783 ou visite o centro de atendimento da sua área local, através do endereço abaixo indicado.

### Kurdish

Ger hûn dixwazin li ser naveroka vê nameyê bi zimanê xwe bi me re bipeyivin, ji kerema xwe têkilî Şaredariya Westminster (0800 358 3783) bikin an biçin navenda karûbarê xweya herêmi.

### Spanish

Si desea hablar con nosotros en su idioma sobre el contenido de esta carta, comuníquese con el Ayuntamiento de Westminster (0800 358 3783) o visite su centro de servicio local.

## How is your rent calculated?

If you're a social housing resident, we follow rules set by the government when we calculate any changes to your rent each year.

The Council sets the rent in accordance with the social housing rent policy which is controlled by the government. Normally, any increase in rent is set at the rate of inflation (in September of the prior year) + 1%.

In line with government guidance, your rent will increase by 7.7% from 01 April 2024.

## What if I'm struggling with the cost?

For tenants who are claiming full benefit, the rent increase will be mitigated by increases in Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

Westminster City Council has a Rent Support Fund to help social housing tenants who are not entitled to Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. The money will be used to cover some or all the upcoming rent increases for households struggling with rent payments during the cost-of-living crisis.

If you need assistance, please register your interest by scanning the QR code or following the link below and an income officer will contact you.

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/rent-support-fund>



## **Energy price increase**

Energy prices across the UK are continuing to rise, which also affects leaseholders and tenants on a district or communal heating system. We are aware that high energy prices are still a big concern for households across Westminster. However, our ability to bulk buy gas means that the cost of energy to our residents on district heating networks is still approximately half the market rate.

To keep the cost of energy as low as possible we bulk buy gas for all our communal energy use across the city. Before the energy crisis, the cost of gas for Westminster City Council was between 1.5p and 2.2p kWh, last reflected in your March 2022 invoice. In 2022 the purchase price went up to 7.8p kWh for gas for a fixed period of 12 months (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024). This is the rate that is now being charged to you for the period April 2024 to March 2025. Although this is a significant increase, it compares well against the market rate of 10.3p kWh.

We know increases in energy costs are worrying for our residents, but we would like to reassure you that we worked hard to secure the best rate.

In addition to this, we have made sure we are registered with Central Government for the Energy Bill Discount Scheme (EBDS). EBDS starts on 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 and any saving experienced by Westminster City Council will be passed directly on to our residents.

## **But why are our costs going up when the wholesale price of gas is coming down?**

Heating and hot water charges are billed in arrears. This means that the amount we are billing you now are the gas prices for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Energy suppliers also typically buy their gas and electricity in advance, allowing them to fix some of their costs. This means that wholesale gas price falls are not immediately passed to consumers.

We know increases in energy costs are worrying for our residents, but we would like to reassure you that we worked hard to secure the best rate.

If you are finding it difficult to pay your rent and service charge then it is important to contact us as soon as possible, our friendly income team are here to help. The sooner you contact us, the sooner we can help you.

**Contact details:** Telephone **0800 358 3783** Email: [housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk)

## **Book a 20 minute online appointment**

You can now book a 20-minute online appointment to discuss your rent and service charges with one of our income advisors.

Appointments are available every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday between 9am to 5pm.  
Page | 2    Explaining the rise in rent and service charges March 2024 – FAQ's

5pm, and every Wednesday between 9am to 8pm.

Appointments take place on Microsoft Teams. Once you have booked your appointment you will receive an email to confirm your upcoming booking. You can manage your booking, reschedule, or cancel your appointment at any time.

Please join the meeting via the Teams link you receive, we will call you after ten minutes of your appointment time if you have not joined the call.

Please provide a summary of what you would like to discuss regarding your rent or service charge to help us to prepare for your appointment.

Book a 20 minute appointment now by scanning the QR code or follow the link below

[www.westminster.gov.uk/housing/tenants/rent-and-service-charges/book-20-minute-online-appointment](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/housing/tenants/rent-and-service-charges/book-20-minute-online-appointment)



### **Cost of living support hub**

We have found that around a quarter of households in Westminster, more than 31,000, face a serious reduction in living standards due to rising costs, such as fuel, energy bills and food. The information provided here can help you with everything from accessing government financial aid to finding local advice services. Whatever hardships you're facing, we're here to help.



For further information, scan the QR code or follow the link below.

[www.westminster.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support)

### **What other help is available**

You can also call the following for advice:

- Citizens Advice Westminster - Advice Line 0808 278 7834  
<https://www.westminstercab.org.uk/advice/online-enquiry/>
- National Debtline - Freephone 0808 808 4000 [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)
- Shelter – 0300 330 1234 (calls cost less than local rate)  
<https://england.shelter.org.uk/>
- Step Change - Freephone 0808 138 1111 808 4000 [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

- Deaf Plus Westminster - [westminster@deafplus.org](mailto:westminster@deafplus.org)  
<https://www.westminstercab.org.uk/partnerships/projects/deafplus-westminster-advice-service/>
- Debt Free London - Freephone 0800 808 5700 (24 hours a day) [www.debtfreeadvice.com](http://www.debtfreeadvice.com)
- Age UK Westminster – 020 3004 5610 (Monday – Friday 10:00am – 2:00pm)  
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/westminster/about-us/contact-us/>

## Contact us

If you have any queries in relation to your rent or service charges, or any other housing matter please contact us:

**Telephone: 0800 358 3783 (freephone)**  
**Email: [housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:housing.enquiries@westminster.gov.uk)**

**You can also visit us in person at one of our Housing Service Centres:**

**North Area Service Centre** - 1 Glasgow House, W9 1QY  
<https://goo.gl/maps/4gbAm8kwjo75qj4e8>

**Queens Park Service Centre** – 82 Bruckner Street, W10 4EY  
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/WAvQNqngCmH8VPPT7>

**West Area Service Centre** - 155 Westbourne Terrace, W2 6JX  
<https://goo.gl/maps/mNZkwKfLd4brdPDDA>

**Bayswater Service Centre** - Shrewsbury Rd, London W2 5PR  
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/JqzUZagwtusf1Adj6>

**Central Area Service Centre** - 24 Lilestone Street, NW8 8SR  
<https://goo.gl/maps/oDnEQvMsLQuW59gr9>

**South Area Service Centre** - 137 Lupus Street, SW1V 3HE  
<https://goo.gl/maps/yut3Det5ZSifQM8c7>

**Charlwood Street Service Centre** - 1-3 Charlwood Street, SW1V 2ED  
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/RMxnhGHBeFteUBc8A>



City of Westminster



Need help paying your rent? Support is available to all Westminster council tenants who don't get full benefits. Contact us using the details below:

Precisa de ajuda para pagar a sua renda? Disponibilizamos apoio a todos os inquilinos do município de Westminster que não recebem os benefícios completos. Contacte-nos utilizando os seguintes dados:

¿Necesita ayuda pagando su alquiler? Ofrecemos asistencia a todos los inquilinos del Concejo de Westminster que no reciben beneficios completos. Contáctenos usando los detalles a continuación:

আপনার ভাড়া পরিশোধ করতে সাহায্য প্রয়োজন? ওয়েস্টমিনস্টার কাউন্সিলের যেসব ভাড়াটে পূর্ণাঙ্গ বেনিফিট পান না তাদের সবার জন্য সহায়তার ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে। নিচের বিবরণ ব্যবহার করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন:

نايا پڻويستت به يارمهتي ههيه بؤ داني كرني خانووه كهت؟ پشتگيري دابين دهكرنت بؤ هه موو نهو كرچيانه ي نه نجومهني ويستمينستر كه يارمهتي دارايي تهواو وهر ناگرن. لهريگه ي نه م ناو نيشاتانه ي خواره وه په يوه نديمان پڻوه بكه:

هل أنت بحاجة إلى المساعدة لدفع إيجارك؟ يتوفر الدعم لكل مستأجري بلدية وستمنستر الذي لا يحصلون على المزايا الكاملة. تواصل معنا باستخدام التفاصيل أدناه:



SCAN ME

[westminster.gov.uk/rent-support-fund](https://westminster.gov.uk/rent-support-fund)

0800 358 3783