

Understanding some of your charges

This year, some of the charges you pay for items in your building have increased, these are called **Building Services Charges**. We wanted to help explain each charge and why there has been an increase.

Emergency lighting contracts servicing and repairs

Services include: Emergency lighting contracts and repairs

If you live in a flat or have access to communal areas, you'll most likely find there is emergency lighting installed. This will illuminate escape routes if your building loses power, making sure the areas are safe to use. It's important that we maintain the system through regular servicing and doing repairs as required.

We use a contractor to do this, and they inspect and test the lights every month while completing a full service annually. The testing ensures the system is working as it should be and involves dropping the power for a short period of time to see that the emergency back-up works. The service is carried out once a year and involves leaving the lights off for 3 hours to ensure the back-up is sufficient. We use different contractors depending on where you live, and the name of your contractor is listed below.

PA pays for a service contract each month; this means we know what our costs are each month for the routine testing and servicing, and this is what we pass onto you. We also pay for any callouts if the lights stop working. Our aim is to get things working again within 4 hours for an emergency and final fix within 24 hours to keep you safe. The cost for this isn't included in our service contract and we don't know in advance how many callouts or repairs we'll get in a year. We do know that things do sometimes fail, and we've estimated what the costs of this might be. In some years it might be higher and in other years lower, but we believe the charge to be fair.

In some areas, we used to carry out the testing using our own teams, but we've recently reviewed this and now use a contractor. This means your charge may look a little different to previous years.

Contractors

Midlands – Fieldway

London and South East - Openview

Fire contract servicing and repairs

Services include : Fire safety maintenance contract, repairs and other fire equipment

If you have access to communal areas, you'll most likely find there to be fire servicing equipment installed. This could include, but is not limited to, fire alarm systems, sprinklers or automatic opening vents. These have all been installed for your safety and it's important that we maintain the systems through regular servicing and doing repairs as required.

We use our in-house team to complete testing at weekly, monthly, and quarterly intervals which includes alarm call point checks and checking the vents are opening automatically. We engage a contractor to complete a full service every 6 months. They will check all the call points, make sure all battery backup works and all detection functions correctly, replacing any faulty equipment. We use different contractors depending on where you live, and the name of your contractor is listed below.

PA pays its own staff for the testing each month and a contractor for the servicing; this means we know what our costs are each month for the routine testing and servicing, and this is what we pass onto you. We also pay for any callouts if the equipment stops working. Our aim is to get things working again within 4 hours for an emergency and final fix within 24 hours to keep you safe. The cost for this isn't included in our service contract and we don't know in advance how many callouts or repairs we'll get in a year. We do know that things do sometimes fail, and we've estimated what the costs of this might be. In some years it might be higher and in other years lower, but we believe the charge to be fair.

In some areas we used to carry out the servicing using our own teams, but we've recently reviewed this and now use a contractor. This means your charge may look a little different to previous years.

Contractors

Midlands – Fieldway

London and South East - Openview

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

If you live in a block, supported scheme or have access to communal areas, PAT testing has to be carried out. PAT stands for Portable Appliance Testing. Each year, we need to test all equipment with a plug e.g. any white goods/ electrical items.

We use a contractor to do this, and they inspect and test the plugs and appliances on an annual basis to ensure these are safe to use. We use different contractors depending on where you live, and the name of your contractor is listed below.

PA pays for a service contract annually; this means we know what our costs are each month for the routine testing and servicing, and this is what we pass onto you.

We've historically undercharged for this service but sadly cannot continue to absorb the costs so you might see an increase in your service charge this year.

Contractors

Midlands – Dodd Group

London and South East – SureServe Compliance South

Communal electrical testing and repairs

If you live in a block or have access to communal areas, an electrical safety test has to be carried out every 5 years. This is a legal requirement for all landlords. We use our in-house team or contractor to do this, and they inspect and test fuseboards, communal circuits, lighting, and sockets.

PA pays for each test, whether that's the contractor or the salaries of our in-house team, this means we know what our costs are for the routine testing and servicing, and this is what we pass onto you. We also pay for any follow on work if there are issues with the electrics in the communal areas. This might include a fuseboard change or rewiring. The cost for this isn't included in our service contract and we don't know in advance how many repairs we'll get in a year. We do know that things do sometimes fail, and we've estimated what the costs of this might be.

Contractors

Midlands – Dodd Group or SureServe Compliance Central

London and South East – In-house team

Water risk assessments (WRA)

Services include : Legionella works contracts

For all our homes with a shared water system, we must carry out a safety check called a water risk assessment (WRA). Depending on the size of the block and the tenure type, these WRAs might need to be completed annually or less frequently.

We use a contractor to do this, and they inspect any water tanks, hot water heaters and any hot and cold outlets e.g. taps in communal areas.

PA pays for each water risk assessment; this means we know what our costs are for the inspection, and this is what we pass onto you.

As an organisation, we have made a decision to carry out WRAs at least every 2 years (some were previously every 5 years) to keep everyone safe. This change in frequency may have caused an increase in your charge.

Contractors

Midlands – currently Severn Trent but contract being procured.

London and South East – currently in-house but contract being procured.

Do you have any questions?

If you have any questions about your Building Services Charges, please contact us or visit our website for more information.

www.pahousing.co.uk