

Cleaning service

If you live in a flat and share a hallway with other tenants, you pay a charge for cleaning the hallway. The cleaners come every week and this is what they are paid to do.

Weekly jobs

- Vacuum all carpets and carpeted stairs
- Spot clean spillages and stains
- Sweep/vacuum and mop all hard floors
- Sweep and clear rubbish to communal entrance steps
- Remove all litter
- Wash down walls
- Clean treads & risers on stairs
- Remove finger marks from internal glass partitions and light switches
- Damp wipe (up to 2m high) all ledges, skirting boards, radiators, windowsills, picture frames, handrails, banisters and fire extinguishers
- Check all light fittings and change bulbs, tubes or starters if necessary
- Report any missing or damaged fire extinguishers, broken light fittings, fire alarms sounding, broken electrical sockets or drug-users syringes

Monthly jobs

- Clean vinyl floors with a buffing machine
- Clean all communal windows, inside and out

Yearly jobs

- 'Deep clean' the communal area

Shared electricity bills

If you share a hallway or a car park with wall-lights, you will share the cost of the electricity to pay for this. Your service charge covers the actual cost of the electricity, plus a small administration charge.

Problems understanding?

If you need any of our information **translating**, or if you need an **interpreter**, please contact us.

 **(0113) 200 7700**

We can also provide this information in **large print** or **on CD** if you need us to.

Unhappy with our service?

If you feel that we have not kept to the standards that we promised in this leaflet, let us know so we can try to put it right.

If you want to make a complaint, you can do so in the following ways.

- Call our Complaints Manager on **(0113) 200 7704**.
- Write to the Complaints Manager at the address below.
- Email us at uha@unityha.co.uk

There is more information about making a complaint in our leaflet *Complaints and Compliments* - please ask us for a copy, or look on our website.

Our contact details

Unity Housing Association
113-117 Chapeltown Road
Leeds LS7 3HY

 **(0113) 200 7700**

Email: uha@unityha.co.uk

Web: www.unityha.co.uk



Your service charge



**Services charges
- what they are**

**What you get
for your money**

**Leaflet 13
Version 2 - Nov 2009**

Service charges

All tenants pay rent on their homes. However, some tenants have extra services and pay a charge for them as well. These can include the following.

- Landscaping communal (shared) areas
- Cleaning communal hallways in flats
- Warden call alarms for the elderly or disabled
- Fire alarms, emergency lighting, door intercoms or shared lifts in flats
- Shared lighting for hallways or car parks
- Shared water rates

Service charges are cost-based. This means that you only pay for what you get. If we manage to save money on your services (e.g. we get a cheaper contractor), your service charge will cost less the following year. However, if we have to spend more than we expect (e.g. our landscapers had to do extra visits), your service charge will go up.

If you pay a service charge, we will tell you when you move in. It changes every year at the same time as your rent (the first Monday in April). We will write to give you a month's notice of the change, telling you exactly which services you get and what they cost.

Most service charges are eligible for housing benefit or *'Supporting People'* funding. A few are not, so even if you are on benefits, you have to pay them yourself. We will tell you if you have to pay a charge.

Emergency call system service

Some of our homes have an extra support service - an **emergency call system**. We only have this service in homes that have been specially developed for elderly or disabled people.

If you have this service, this is what you pay for.

- The phone line connecting the emergency call system to the call centre
- The weekly charge for the call centre to monitor the scheme (24 hour cover)
- Annual maintenance, servicing and repairs to the emergency call system
- An administration charge

This service is not eligible for housing benefit, but some tenants on low incomes can get *'Supporting People'* funding to pay for it.

If you are a new tenant, we will help you claim *'Supporting People'* funding when you sign up for your home. If you are already our tenant, we will send you an application form if you ask us to, and can help you fill it in if you want.

Door intercoms

If you live in a flat and have a door intercom, you pay a service charge to cover the cost of repairing the system and replacing it when it gets old. There is also a small administration charge.

Landscaping service

You pay a charge for landscaping if Unity owns land where you live and you share it with other residents. This can include lawns, shrubs, laundry areas or communal car parks.

If you have this service, this is what you're paying for.

- **Grass cutting:** every two weeks, April-October
- **Litter-picking:** every two weeks
- **Pruning and hedge-cutting:** at least twice a year, more if necessary
- **Weeds:** all beds should be kept free of weeds. The landscapers spray weed killer when necessary.
- **Leaf clearing:** at least five times a year, in autumn and winter

One size does not fit all. We want to work with our residents to offer a tailor-made service that fits your area. For instance, if you have privet hedges next to your path, they need cutting more often. If you have any suggestions, please talk to our landscapers or contact our *Resident Involvement Officer*.

Fire alarms & emergency lighting

By law, we have to have these in developments that have flats or shared hallways. We pay a contractor to inspect, test and service them for us, to keep our tenants safe. This is what they do.

- **Weekly:** inspection and manual testing of fire alarm, updating log book, check that fire extinguishers are not missing or damaged
- **Monthly:** inspection and manual testing of emergency lights

Your service charge also covers an administration charge and pays into a *'sinking fund'*, which is like a savings account to pay for replacing your fire alarms and emergency lighting when they get old.

Frequently asked questions

Q: What about the carpets or redecoration in our shared hallway?

A: You don't pay a charge for this. We redecorate every 5 years and replace carpets when we need to.

Q: What can I do if I don't think I'm getting good value for money?

A: Please contact us and suggest ways in which we could do things differently. You can monitor the service for us if you want, or volunteer to look after a landscaped area yourself to reduce your rent.