

Supporting information for
**housing benefit
managers**



This guide has been produced to help explain how we, Progress Housing Association Limited and Reside Housing Association Limited, trading as RWP, set the rent for properties that fall outside the normal reference rent of the Local Housing Allowance.

We are registered providers with the Regulator of Social Housing. Therefore, the tenancies of our supported living schemes are classed as 'excluded tenancies'. As such, under Regulation 14 para 2b of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006, local authorities are not required to refer the rent. This position was confirmed in HB Circular A12/2010.

Housing provided by us, RWP, is (with a few exceptions) classed as specialised supported housing (SSH). SSH is defined within the government's policy statement on rents for social housing (2020). To meet the SSH definition, supported housing must meet all the criteria defined in section two of those regulations. Each aspect of these criteria and the steps we take to meet them are considered in turn in the paragraphs that follow:

Designation

The regulations state 'specialised supported housing' means supported housing; which is designed, structurally altered, refurbished or designated for occupation by, and made available to, tenants who require specialised services or support to enable them to live or to adjust to living, independently within the community.

High level of support

Specialised supported housing is further defined as that:

- Which offers a high level of support
- Which approximates the services or support which would be provided in a care home, for tenants for whom the only acceptable alternative would be a care home.

Public assistance

To qualify as specialised supported housing, there must have been either:

- no public assistance, or
- if there was public assistance, it must have been by means of a loan secured by means of a charge or a mortgage against a property.

'Public assistance' here means either assistance given by the Regulator of Social Housing on the condition that the recipient provides social housing (whether by itself or as part of a wider project); or assistance provided via any other public capital grant, subsidy or loan, including any transfer of land for less than its unrestricted value.

Therefore if the housing concerned were delivered with the aid (whether in whole or in part) of public funding, it would only qualify as specialised supported housing if that public funding took the form of a loan secured against that housing.

During the development phase, all costs are actuals, and RWP's Senior Leadership Team approves the final appraisal.

We hope this guide is both informative and helpful. Please contact us if more information is required (see the back page for contact details).

About us

RWP was formed following a merger of Progress Housing Association Limited and Reside Housing Association Limited in September 2021. We are one of the UK's leading supported living housing associations. We have a national reputation for providing high-quality housing solutions for individuals with a range of support needs.

Our flexible, innovative approach enables autistic adults, people with learning and physical disabilities, and those experiencing mental health problems to lead a fulfilling and independent life in their own homes.

As a result of our strong partnership, we provide high-quality homes across the UK and empower our tenants to make real choices about how they want to live.

For more information, visit www.residewithprogress.org.uk

1. Breakdown of the base rent

The base rent comprises amounts for housing management, day-to-day, planned and cyclical repairs, contribution to the capital cost of the scheme, and contribution to any future aids and adaptations which may be needed so that the tenant can continue to live at the scheme despite changing physical needs. There may also be specific building-related charges. A void and bad debt percentage is added to these costs to cover us for loss of income when units are unoccupied.

2. Breakdown of service charges

Where communal housing-related services are provided, we cover the cost through the service charge. The costs are fixed annually through a review of actual costs for the previous twelve months, where known or based on estimates using information from similar schemes. Service charges include such items as communal heating and lighting, furniture and equipment renewals and replacements, and internal decoration of communal areas. The rent schedule contains a full breakdown of the service charges.

3. How service charges are calculated

For existing schemes, service charges are reviewed annually by taking into account costs from previous years, factoring in any known changes in the cost of supplies and seeking to find efficiencies in service delivery. Where possible, a quote for service provision for the following year is obtained from the supplier, and supplier costs are regularly reviewed to ensure value for money.

For new schemes, service charges are calculated using quotes from suppliers or estimates based on experience from similar schemes already in management. Where neither of these options is possible, an average charge is calculated from costs incurred in the specific area for the previous twelve months.

4. Tenancy type

We will issue assured shorthold tenancies in most cases. At sign-up, tenants are guided through the main clauses of the agreement and provided with a pictorial version of the agreement, which is in an Easy Read format.

5. Cost of staff facility and why it is included

The majority of tenants living in our schemes require overnight support for which a staff facility is provided, usually a bedroom in a shared house or bungalow. The cost of providing this is included in the capital cost of the scheme. A staff facility is fundamental to providing supported living accommodation to enable tenants to continue living in the community.

6. Do you provide direct care support to tenants?

We **do not** provide care support to our tenants. The support package for individuals is determined by the local commissioner, who also contracts with a support provider to provide that support. Sometimes tenants benefit from Direct Payments where the commissioner still determines their support package, but they may choose who provides that support for them.

We **do** provide additional housing management services to ensure that tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and can benefit from independent living.

In summary:

- Our tenants benefit from having a dedicated supported housing officer who works specifically for them
- We provide a range of tenancy management services, such as advice on tenant management and authority for our officers to liaise with a variety of representatives, for example, court-appointed deputies, attorneys, financial appointees and Housing Benefit in relation to monitoring our tenants' rent accounts.

7. General housing management and maintenance functions

The general housing management functions provided by employees, such as income collection and arrears management, are more extensive than would be the case within 'general needs'

housing because of the varying ability of tenants to understand and retain information provided to them. We provide a more extensive responsive repair and maintenance service because our tenants are vulnerable and have specific needs.

To meet the housing support needs of tenants, we provide housing management and maintenance services that specifically meet our tenants' needs. This involves providing the following housing management services, which are more than that which would be provided by a general needs social or private landlord:

- Accepting nominations from individuals who may lack the capacity to enter into a tenancy agreement. Some tenants do not have the capacity to sign their tenancy agreements but as capacity changes over time, all our employees understand the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act
- Ensuring that both tenants and their advocates/family support members understand their rights and responsibilities of being a tenant, which involves:
 - Making all documents available in accessible versions, including Easy Read, large font and audio
 - Provision of short videos which outline the roles and responsibilities of both tenants and landlord, which are used when tenants are signed up for their tenancy.

- Ensuring that all support staff receive information and support to assist them in responding to 'easy to answer' queries or supporting the tenant to contact housing management employees. This includes the production of the handbook for support staff which is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Providing a comprehensive telephone advice service specifically tailored to meet the needs of the client group, which entails ensuring that all employees receive regular training on communication techniques when talking to people with a range of communication difficulties including speech and holding conversations.
- Structuring all procedures to take into account the different responses that are required when taking action on issues such as rent arrears, anti-social behaviour incidents (whether caused by a tenant or a third party).
- Providing an extensive repair and maintenance service that is both responsive to the needs of tenants and flexible to ensure tenants receive an appropriate response in each case. This includes ensuring that repairs resulting from tenant damage are investigated to avoid unnecessary recharges to the tenant or attributing a higher priority response time to ensure tenants are not inconvenienced.
- Monitoring the need for and arranging, when necessary, adaptations to a property which may prove necessary over time to continue to meet the physical needs of tenants, which will range from the installation of ramps and handrails to accessible bathing facilities.
- Our properties are acquired, designed and refurbished specifically to meet the needs of our tenants for them to live independently within the community. We monitor changes in tenant needs and provide any adaptations that may be required to allow them to continue to live independently.
- Ensure continuing compliance with:
 - Health and safety legislation and guidance
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
 - Control of legionella bacteria in water systems – undertaking risk assessments and ongoing monitoring.
- In addition, the presence of staff providing care support to tenants in the property requires us to comply with aspects of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations. This is over and above what would be required in a general needs let.

8. Liaison with other agencies

Our employees liaise with local service commissioners and support providers regularly. This is essential to ensure nominations to tenancies are discussed to make sure tenants are suitably matched to the properties and resolve any issues that may arise, such as a conflict between tenants within shared properties. Support provider meetings cover a wide range of topics, such as voids, tenancy issues and support issues.

9. Providing information on tenancy-related matters

We provide a wide range of accessible materials.

- For example, we provide a pictorial tenancy agreement. We also provide a range of Easy Read leaflets covering topics such as paying rent, anti-social behaviour and reporting repairs
- We provide a quarterly newsletter to all tenants, designed to be easy to read and informative on various tenancy-related matters. Information is provided on issues pertaining to supported living tenants, such as welfare reform. The newsletter is provided in a range of formats, including audio
- Tenants can also access a range of services, such as having the facility to pay their rent through our website, www.residewithprogress.org.uk.



10. Employee training relating to housing management

We recognise that our employees need to be skilled in providing a service tailored to meet the needs of tenants with support needs.

- Internal courses are regularly provided to update supported living employees on the latest developments and good practices in managing supported living tenancies, such as arrears management, void management, anti-social behaviour, learning disabilities, mental health, Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberty and British Sign Language.

11. Tenant consultation on tenancy-related matters

We have a highly active tenant participation service that supports our tenants in any number of areas that they may require support. Our team supports tenants on aspects of their tenancy, enabling them to maintain and sustain their tenancies with us. They also provide a wide variety of training sessions around service delivery. The team also provides opportunities for all tenants to have a say in how we deliver housing management services.

12. Other duties

- As well as the general housing management activities described, we also undertake at least two visits a year to each of our properties to undertake an extensive review of the services being provided to tenants and follow up on any issues raised by the visit. These review visits are in addition to the annual safety and security inspections for fire safety, smoke detector and thermostatic mixer valves service and maintenance and landlord gas safety checks
- The visits enable us to ensure that the property continues to meet tenants' needs and is fit for purpose. We also review the need to revisit the fire safety plan and ensure all records relating to gas, asbestos risk, and legionella checks are available and up-to-date
- We provide an extensive repair and maintenance service in excess of that provided in general needs housing due to the nature of our tenants' disabilities. Regular stock condition surveys are undertaken, and repair employees work with tenants and support staff to ensure the property meets the requirements of tenants with physical disabilities. This is in addition to any visits that may be required concerning specific maintenance repairs or emergencies
- This would include responding to repairs more quickly than would be the norm for general needs properties and amending the design and specification of fittings and equipment in cases where an individual may be damaging equipment due to their lack of ability/disability

- In addition to this enhanced repairs and maintenance service, we are required to ensure compliance with legislation such as the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and the Approved Code of Practice issued by the Health and Safety Executive on the control of legionella bacteria in water systems
- The standard procedure by our dedicated Customer Contact Centre advisors when taking calls from our tenants includes ensuring that the tenants continue to be safe and able to use the property. Priority times to complete repairs may be amended as follows:
 - **No heating** (urgent if alternative heating is not available) will be prioritised as an emergency if all clients are not comfortable using a fire/heater (health and safety issues)
 - **No hot water** (urgent) will be prioritised as an emergency due to possible incontinence issues and also tenant distress
 - **Flickering lights** (urgent) can cause distress to tenants and possible fits and are therefore urged forward
 - **Smoke alarm beeping and fire door batteries beeping** (24-hour emergency) will arrange for the same day due to distress levels caused by the noise
 - **Fence panels missing/broken gate locks** (routine repairs) will be prioritised due to tenants who may abscond

- **Security lights** not working (sometimes routine) prioritised due to the vulnerability of tenants
- **Entrance and exit doors** will be prioritised due to tenant access and wheelchair access, whereas these would not be emergencies if alternative access and exit doors were available
- **Rechargeable repairs** – where appropriate, to minimise tenant distress, these repairs are carried out before payment is made to ensure the tenant feels safe in their home. Payment is always required before the repair is completed in general let stock.

For information, rent and service charges are reviewed annually in line with the government's guidance. Service charges are reviewed against the actual cost for the previous 12 months and increased in line with that information or actual cost.

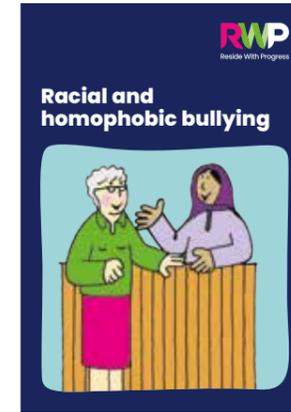
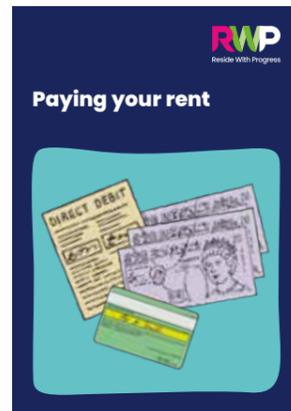
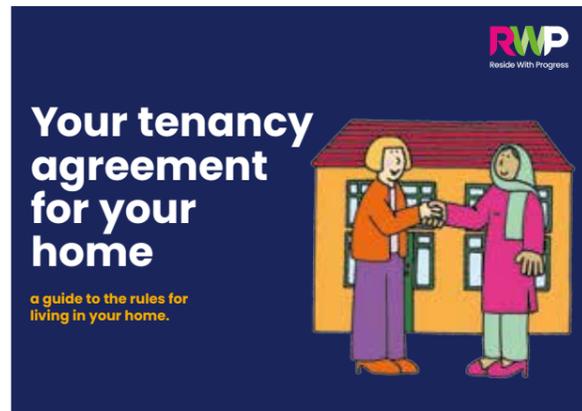
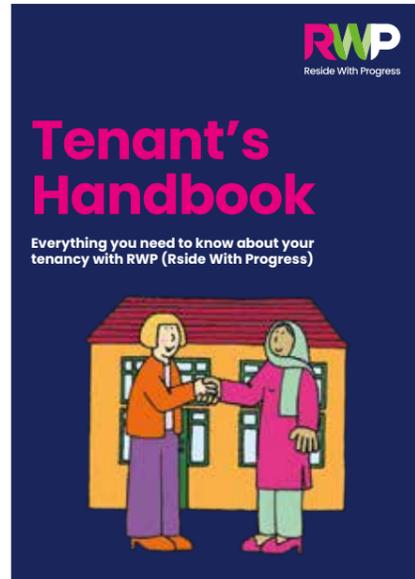
13. Adaptations and facilities

Some of our tenants have physical disabilities; consequently, specific aids and adaptations are required for them to live independently. These can include specialist baths, overhead tracking and hoists, and the more usual handrails and ramps. Additional bathroom facilities are often provided to ensure timely access to a bathroom or WC.



Our literature

We provide a wide range of pictorial information handbooks, booklets and newsletters for our tenants and support workers. All information can be available in various formats, such as large print, Braille and audio, to be accessible to all. All new tenants receive access to videos which explain their tenancy rights and responsibilities, and how they can access our services. These can be found on our website at www.residewithprogress.org.uk/easy-read/



If you would like this leaflet in another language or format (such as large print, audio or Braille) or if you require the services of an interpreter, please phone us on 0333 320 2675.

اردو (Urdu)

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廣東話 (中文繁體字) (Cantonese)

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