

Frequently asked questions

Rent charges annual review:
April 2016 to March 2017

INFORMATION FOR AFFORDABLE RENTS

HOW RENTS & SERVICE CHARGES ARE CALCULATED

Q: How does East Thames work out affordable rents for residents?

A: Once market rents are calculated (as explained in next question), Affordable rents are set so that these rent levels are:

- not higher than 80% of the market rent ,
- not exceeding 45% of Total Net Income for relevant typical household or
- not higher than Local Housing Allowance for relevant dwelling at the time.

Q: How does East Thames work out market rents for residents?

A: We look at the following factors when setting your market rent.

1. We look at current market rent and valuation information, by property type and postcode, using Right Move, Hometrack, Zoopla and London Rents Map (Greater London postcodes only).
2. We consider the results of an independent assessment which details the features of your property. The average market rent increases when the assessment shows features that add value to the property. This includes things like private gardens, a balcony, off street secure communal parking, or an en-suite bath or shower room (this list is not exhaustive). The market rent decreases when the assessment shows features that decrease value to the property. This includes things like a lack of parking, intrusive noise or a box room less than 6.5 square meters.
3. The market rent increases when you have communal service charges that are over and above those provided in other developments. These service charges include: communal heating, communal

electricity, block water supply, CCTV, electronic gates, concierge, gym, communal service charges delivered by a managing agent (this list is not exhaustive).

HOW TO PAY FOR RENT & SERVICE CHARGES

Q: Do I need to adjust my direct debit?

A: As set out in your tenancy agreement, you pay your rent monthly in advance by direct debit. This is one of the simplest ways of paying, as once it is set up the money is debited from your account automatically. If you need to set up a direct debit, or discuss your payment method please contact the customer accounts team on **0300 303 7333** (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-8.30pm).

Q: What can I do if I'm having problems paying my rent?

A: If you have problems paying your rent or coping with debt, please contact us for support and advice- phone the customer contact centre on 0300 303 7333 (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-8.30pm) or drop into our head office to speak to us at 29-35, West Ham Lane, Stratford E15 4PH (Mon -Fri, 8.30am- 6.00pm). If you need help with managing your money or sorting out your welfare and benefits, contact us for a free, independent appointment with a welfare advisor. You can phone on **0300 303 7333** or email welfare.benefits@east-thames.co.uk

Q: Are the service charges for my property payable by housing benefit?

A: If you claim housing benefit, we may be asked for a breakdown of the services attached to your property. Most communal services are usually covered by housing benefit, with the exception of any services applicable to your personal property. These services are where there is a bulk water, heating or electricity supply, where the costs are applied and paid for by East Thames and you are therefore not in receipt of your own utility bills from companies such as Thames Water, British Gas, Eon etc.

THE SERVICES PROVIDED

Q: Are communal service charges paid within my rent payment?

A: Yes, they are. If your property has communal service charges, your monthly rent amount, as advised by East Homes, already incorporates an amount towards communal service charges.

Q: If there is a failure in a communal service, can I get a refund?

A: If a service fails or isn't working the way it should, please tell us and we will organise for it to be repaired. East Thames has maintenance contractors in place for its equipment, any failure or interruption of such services cannot be attributable to East Thames and therefore refunds will not be made.

Q: The internal cleaning/external maintenance provided for my block is not carried out to a decent standard.

Who do I need to contact to report this?

A: Cleaning and grounds maintenance services are carried out by contractors on behalf of East Thames. To ensure they are carried out to a decent standard our neighbourhood managers carry out estate inspections, and we always welcome residents who would like to take part in these inspections. If you are concerned about the standards or want to take part in an inspection, please contact your neighbourhood manager or call **0300 303 7333**, stating where you live and you will be put through to the right person.

Q: If I am unhappy with my new charge, what can I do?

A: If your increase has been applied after the end of the initial assured shorthold term of your tenancy and if you want to appeal your new charge, you can write to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Residential Property (FTT) at 10 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7LR for an independent valuation. Once the FTT have reviewed your rent, they will write to you, advising you of the new revised rent, and the date from which the new charge will take effect.

If you have any further questions

Call: 0300 303 7333 (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-8.30pm)

Email: rents&servicecharges@east-thames.co.uk

In person: 29-35 West Ham Lane,
Stratford E15 4PH (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6.00pm)

Online: www.east-thames.co.uk/rents-and-service