

Tenants also have the right to appeal to an independent body called the Rent Assessment Committee. If you are a Secure Tenant, the Rent Assessment Committee will re-assess your rent. It may increase, decrease or agree with the rent set by the Rent Officer. If you are an Assured Tenant, the Rent Assessment Committee will consider your rent and service charges by comparing them to what is being charged on the open market. Market rents are usually above Arcon's rents so tenants are strongly advised to seek independent advice from a Citizen's Advice Bureau or a Law Centre before approaching the Rent Assessment Committee.

**North Western
Rent Assessment Panel,**
Alexandra House
14/22 The Parsonage
Manchester
M3 2JA
Tel. 0161 832 9661

Rents and Service Charges



The rents of Arcon tenants fall into two categories. If you are a secure tenant your rent is fixed by the Rent Officer Service. If you are an assured tenant, Arcon itself sets your rent.

This leaflet explains how your rent and service charges are fixed and your right to appeal to an independent organization, the Rent Assessment Committee, if you are unhappy with the amounts charged.

Rents and Secure Tenants

If your first tenancy with Arcon began before 15th January 1989, your rent is fixed by the Independent Rent Officer service. The Rent Officer will set a rent appropriate for the age, character, locality and state of repair of the property. The rent will take no account of your personal circumstances nor will it include the value of any improvements you yourself may have made.

Once the rent is decided, the Rent Officer will send you a copy of the Rent Register for your home. The rent stated on this register is the most the Association can charge and this rent cannot be changed for 2 years from the date of registration. Every 2 years the Association will ask the Rent Officer to register a new rent.

Rents and Assured Tenancies

If your first tenancy with Arcon began after 15th January 1989 your rent is set by Arcon in accordance with its annual Rent Plan. To protect tenants from large rent increases, the Government has said that no rent will rise by more than the rate of inflation plus 0.5% plus £2. The Government has taken this step to standardize the way rents are set by Housing Associations and Local Authorities. They want rents to become similar for properties of a similar size, location and condition regardless of who the landlord is. Your rent must be set at a level that is affordable to families on low incomes but at the same time it must cover the costs of the building, its management and maintenance. The rent will also reflect the age, condition and location of the property. All these obligations mean that rents for assured tenants can be higher than rents for secure tenants.

The rents for your property will be stated in your tenancy agreement. It cannot be increased until twelve months after the start date of your tenancy and at twelve month intervals thereafter and will normally increase in line with the retail price index.

Service Charges

Service charges cover the costs of items such as keeping in use lifts, door entryphones, gardening and lighting of communal areas. Although these charges are part of the total weekly sum that you pay for your home, they are not the same as rent. They are the real cost of maintaining facilities that are not part of the structure of the building. These costs will change from time to time because electricity charges may go up or because specialist maintenance contracts may increase in price.

The amount you are required to pay for service charges is stated in the tenancy agreement when you move into a new home. Charges for assured tenancies and most secure tenancies are reviewed once a year. Certain secure tenancies, depending on the terms of their rent registration, may only have their service charges reviewed once every two years.

All Arcon tenants have the right to obtain a summary of the costs on which their service charge is based, to inspect the accounts on which the summary is based, and to challenge any charge felt to be excessive. Contact your Housing Officer if you wish to exercise this right.

Housing Benefit

All Arcon rents and most service charges are eligible for Housing Benefit, if you, the tenant qualify.

Appeals against Rent and Service Charges

Any tenant who believes their rent or service charge to be excessive should, in the first instance, contact their local area Housing Officer and follow Arcon's normal complaints procedure. (See Information for Tenants Leaflet, No. 9B).