

A Guide to Recharges

Inside this leaflet you will find a guide to recharges:

- what are recharges
- how you will be informed if you have a recharge
- how to avoid recharges or minimise the risk of a recharge
- the benefits of contents insurance
- how to arrange payment of a recharge



RECHARGES EXPLAINED

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a guide for tenants

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What are recharges?

Recharges are invoices or bills which are passed to a tenant to pay. They usually result from a repair for which a tenant is held responsible under the conditions of the tenancy agreement. Typical instances of repairs being rechargeable include:

- repairs resulting from a tenant's own equipment failure, for example a faulty electrical appliance causing electrics to 'trip'
- payment of a contractor's wasted time when no access is available despite an appointment previously being agreed between the contractor and the tenant
- sorting unauthorised alterations discovered at the end of a tenancy
- damage considered to be beyond 'fair wear and tear', for example if a flat is left in a dirty state or nicotine stained after a tenancy has ended, the cleaning or re-decoration bill will normally be recharged to the outgoing tenant

(Please note the above list of examples is not exhaustive. There are many other instances when a recharge can be raised.)

Castlehill is a registered charity that depends on tenants' rent money to fund our services. You are legally responsible through your tenancy agreement to take care of your home and ask permission for alterations. Where this is not done, it is not fair that the rents of tenants who do meet their tenancy obligations are paying for those who don't. It also means that there is less money to do things like upgrade your kitchen or bathroom. This is why we recharge.

Will I be notified before I receive a recharge?

We always try to give advance warning before sending a recharge invoice. Recharges normally happen in one of two ways:

- The first is through you reporting a repair. When this happens we will try to let you know if we think there is a possibility that the repair may be rechargeable, and possibly give you the option of arranging the repair yourself if it is considered a 'tenant responsible

item'. For example if you call to report "no television reception" we would warn you that should the fault be with your own equipment such as a faulty Freeview box, then you would be recharged for the TV engineer's time.

However it is not always possible to give prior notice about a recharge. A typical instance would be a blocked toilet where the cause is found to be something which should not have been flushed down the toilet, for example, baby wipes.

- The second way is when you are leaving your home and we find that we would not be able to re-let it without doing some work. We do accept "fair wear and tear" but unapproved alterations, poor decoration, nicotine damage and not returning all keys and fobs which have been issued are all things we can recharge you for.

Your Maintenance Officer will contact you to arrange to inspect your home once you have told us you are leaving and it is important that you make and keep this appointment so you can get the chance to do some or all



of the work required yourself and avoid recharges.

You also have an obligation to leave your home clean and tidy and again we will recharge you if you return your keys without cleaning your home.



How can I avoid or minimise the risk of incurring a recharge?

In some instances it may be impossible to avoid a recharge but the risk can be minimised by always looking after your home and reporting any damage to your Maintenance or Housing Officer as soon as possible. This is actually a condition of your Tenancy Agreement. Often not reporting damage or a repair can lead to further damage. For example the repair of a minor leak at a kitchen sink would normally be a non rechargeable repair, but left unreported the kitchen unit could also become damaged, and the repair for this additional damage would be rechargeable.

Contents Insurance cover

It is very important that you have contents insurance in place and this is an obligation of your tenancy. Make sure this includes accidental damage. For example if you accidentally broke a wash hand basin by dropping something on it you would be recharged for replacing the wash hand basin, but your contents insurance could cover you for this (note that depending on your particular policy there may or may not be an excess amount for which you would be responsible).

What if I do not agree with a recharge?

If you do not agree, dispute or do not think a recharge is fair you should contact our Income Management Officer as soon as possible. In most instances the circumstances are clear enough and the reasons can be easily explained, but at times there may be a need to consult with the original contractor who carried out the repair that has been recharged.

What if I cannot pay or refuse to pay a recharge?

Recharges are completely separate from rent. If you are getting Housing Benefit this will not pay for recharges. All tenants are personally responsible for paying their own recharges.

If you are having, or think you will have any difficulty in paying a recharge you should speak to your Housing Officer. Often you can pay your recharge by arrangement at no extra cost.

If you ignore or refuse to pay a recharge, the Association will take legal action to recover the debt. The Association passes unpaid recharges to a Debt Collection Agency who may take additional legal action to recover the recharge amount due. Such an extreme situation could affect your chances of gaining a new tenancy with Castlehill in the future, or with another Registered Social Landlord.

If you have any questions please contact the Maintenance department:

Tel: 01224 625822

Email: info@castlehillha.co.uk