

TITLE	RENT AND CHARGES POLICY AND PROCEDURE
1. Rent and charges statement	<p>Abbeyfield Oxford sets and reviews its rent for a house/houses on an annual basis and its charges as needed to ensure that the rent and charges are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable to current and potential residents • Appropriate to the accommodation and services provided. • Clear and transparent • Covering the costs involved in providing these services and provide a secure basis for the continuing provision of services • Operating in accordance with Housing Regulatory requirements on rent and charges setting and levels.
2. Objectives	<p>The objectives of the procedure are to ensure that Abbeyfield Oxford adopts a consistent, fair and transparent approach in the way it sets and varies the rents and charges in its house(s).</p> <p>The aim of the procedure are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set core rents at a level that reflect the size and facilities of the room (s) being rented and operate in accordance with Target rent requirements. • Set charges that reflect the cost and value of the services being provided. • Provide clear information to tenants on the breakdown of rent and charges. • Be fair and transparent so we can explain it and demonstrate accountability for its effective operation. • Create a clear process for communicating with tenants and managing any appeals.
3. Rent and Service Charges	<p>The component elements of the rent and charges paid by tenants and subject to review are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core or basic rent. Which reflects the accommodation including the facilities provided to the tenant (thus a large room will have a higher core rent than a smaller room in the same house). • Target rents. Achievement of the target rent is a goal of the rent and charges review and provides a guide to the charge the

	<p>tenant is asked to meet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service charges which reflect the services provided to the tenant.
<p>4. Policy Framework</p>	<p>This policy and procedure operates in accordance with</p> <p>a) The Tenants Services Authority Regulatory Code and Guidance (published by the Housing Corporation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing associations must operate viable businesses, with adequate recourse to financial resources to meet their current and future business and financial commitments: • Housing associations must set rents which move towards target social rents and are, on average, below those in the private sector for similar properties and which reflect size, property value and local earnings • 3.1.a Rents are set in accordance with the rent restructuring formula. • 3.1.b All residents have information about their landlords rent policy and rent levels across the associations stock and the relevant local authority area. All residents have information about their service charges including costs that their charges cover, how charges are budgeted and increases calculated. <p>b) The Housing Corporation 2001 publication: Rent Influencing Regime: Implementing the Rent Restructuring Framework. This requires Housing Associations to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate within a consistent approach to the setting of rents based on local income levels and the value of the property let. This approach is defined as a “target rent”.
<p>5. Rent and Charges Components and Eligibility</p>	<p>The rent and charges consist of :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Core rent (eligible for Housing benefit) 2. Service Charges (eligible for Housing Benefit) 3. Service Charges (ineligible for benefit) 4. Council Tax (eligible for Housing Benefit) 5. Support services (eligible for Supporting People funding where a contract is in place)

<p>6. Rent and Charges Changes</p>	<p>Rent and charges adjustments will take place in accordance with the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TSA guidance on rent increases. • Progress towards and maintenance of target rents. • Ensuring that costs are covered and that the current and future viability of the scheme is positively resourced. • Rent and charges levels will reflect the room(s) let and the services provided. • Clear communication with tenants and their representatives on the new charges, the arrangements for advice, appeal (if chosen) and payment
<p>7. Rent and Charges Change Date</p>	<p>In line with this policy and its Assured Periodic Tenancy Agreement for Supported Sheltered Shared housing Abbeyfield Oxford will increase rent to begin on the 1st of October (for tenants who have been resident for 52 weeks or more at that date). If someone joins in May we would charge what we expect in October and adjust following year. Service charges will be increased as needed.</p>
<p>8. Procedure for Changes in Rent & Charges</p>	<p>8.1 Abbeyfield Oxford will establish its proposals for changes in rent and charges through careful planning involving staff operating at local, regional and national level.</p> <p>8.2 The rent and charges proposed will be specific to the rooms and services provided.</p> <p>8.3 Changes to charges will be introduced in accordance with the policy framework set out in Section 4 and the principles set out in Section 6.</p> <p>8.4 The overall framework will be agreed by the Abbeyfield Oxford Executive committee.</p> <p>8.5 The overall proposals and timescale will be introduced to residents through a resident’s consultation meeting.</p> <p>8.6 Residents who have any general question will be able to ask</p>

	<p>that question either in the meeting or individually of a staff member after the meeting.</p> <p>8.7 An individual letter will be sent to residents at least 28 days before the increase is due to come in.</p> <p>8.8 The letter will set out :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the nature of the proposed changes and the reasons for them. • access to advice and support within the house and from the Executive Committee. <p>8.9 Enclosed with the letter will be :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two copies of Notice of Increase in Charges • Two copies of the breakdown of the rent and charges for the amount it is proposed is payable for the tenancy from the notified date. • A covering letter with each copy which explains the changes and can be sent with the sheet to a benefit agency/agencies if the resident intends to claim financial support • A partially completed standing order mandate for the changed rent and charges. <p>This information will be available in other formats (large print, audio CD) and in other languages upon request.</p>
<p>9.External Advice</p>	<p>If a resident and/or their representative wish to get independent advice on the change in rent and charges they may obtain this from an adviser of their choice. This may include the Citizens Advice Bureau, Age UK or a Solicitor.</p>
<p>10. Appeals Process</p>	<p>If a resident has concerns about the changes in rent and charges and wishes to appeal against this they are able to appeal to the Executive Committee..</p> <p>If the resident is not satisfied with Abbeyfields response then in respect of the increased core rent the resident can apply to the Local County Court to have the increase assessed. If the resident wishes to challenge the increase in the service charge element then an application will have to be made to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.</p>

	<p>If they choose to appeal externally this must commence during the notice period and before the due date for the rent and charges change to come into place.</p>
<p>11. Rent and Charges for Vacant Rooms</p>	<p>Where a room/rooms are vacant Abbeyfield Oxford will set a charge for the room based on the policy framework set out in Section 4 and the principles set out in Section 6 which charge will be met by Abbeyfield Oxford.</p>
<p>12. Tenancy Agreement</p>	<p>This policy and procedure is referenced in the Assured Periodic Tenancy Agreement for Supported Sheltered Shared Housing.</p> <p><i>“6. Any changes in the charges will be made in accordance with our policy for setting rent and charges as it may be amended from time to time”.</i></p>
<p>13. Policy and Procedure Update</p>	<p>This policy was last updated in February 2015.</p> <p>The policy is due for updating in January 2018.</p>