

Rent and Service Charge Policy (Housing)

Policy Name:	Rent and Service Charge Policy (Housing)
Version:	V.1
Approved by:	<i>The Board of Management and Trustees</i>
Approved date:	17th November 2025
Next review date:	17th November 2026
Key Legislation and Regulations:	<p>Housing Act 1996 Care Act 2014 Charities Act 2011 Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 Regulator of Social Housing Lettings Guidance Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing (2020) Renters' Rights Act 2025</p> <p>Oakfield aligns with best practices from sector leaders ensuring fairness, compliance, and tenant empowerment.</p>
Relevant Policies:	<p>Safeguarding Repairs & Maintenance Risk Management Complaints EDI</p>
EA:	Equality Analysis is currently under review
DPIA:	DPIA is currently under review
Consultation:	Board of Trustees
Applies to:	All Tenants, employees and volunteers

1. Policy Statement

Oakfield Easton Maudit Ltd is a registered charity and charitable company in England and Wales. We provide high-quality supported housing for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism, under Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreements. As a provider of Specialised Supported Housing, we are committed to setting and managing rent and service charges in a way that is fair, transparent, and financially sustainable.

This policy outlines how Oakfield sets, reviews, and communicates rent and service charges, ensuring compliance with social housing regulation and supported exempt accommodation guidance. Oakfield aligns with best practices from sector leaders, ensuring affordability, accountability, and tenant empowerment.

2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Ensure rent and service charges are low-cost, lawful, and transparent
- Maintain financial viability while meeting regulatory expectations

- Support tenants to understand and manage their housing costs
- Comply with the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing (2020)
- Provide clarity on service charge eligibility, calculation, and review

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All tenants living in Oakfield-supported accommodation
- All employees and volunteers involved in housing management and finance
- Referring and commissioning bodies, including Local Authority Adult Social Care Teams
- All tenancy types issued by Oakfield, including Assured Shorthold Tenancies

4. Rent Setting

Oakfield provides Specialised Supported Housing, which is exempt from the standard social rent formula. However, rent must remain low-cost and below market rate. Due to the limited private market for comparable properties, Oakfield uses a multi-faceted approach to determine fair rent levels, including:

- Independent property valuations
- Benchmarking against rent levels set by other social housing providers of similar supported housing
- Rent levels are set to cover intensive housing management, maintenance, and long-term repair obligations, while remaining affordable and eligible for Housing Benefit.

5. Service Charges

Service charges are separate from rent and reflect the actual cost of providing communal services.

These may include:

- Utilities for shared areas
- Cleaning and maintenance of communal spaces
- Fire alarm servicing and health and safety compliance
- Grounds maintenance and waste disposal
- Other eligible services required to maintain safe and supportive accommodation

Service charges are calculated annually and itemised for transparency. Only eligible costs are included, in line with Housing Benefit regulations and supported exempt accommodation guidance.

6. Rent and Service Charge Review

Rent and service charges are reviewed annually, with changes typically enacted on 1 April. Tenants will receive written notice at least one month in advance, including:

- The new rent and service charge amounts
- A breakdown of how each figure has been calculated
- Any changes resulting from property improvements or service adjustments

Rent or service charges may also be reviewed outside of the annual cycle if there is a material change to the property or service provision.

7. Affordability and Support

Oakfield supports tenants to manage their housing costs by:

- Assisting with Housing Benefit or Universal Credit applications
- Providing budgeting support and benefit advice

- Offering clear, accessible information about rent and service charges
- Responding promptly to queries or concerns

8. Complaints

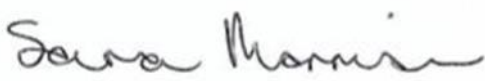
Tenants may raise concerns about rent or service charges through Oakfield's Complaints Procedure, which is available in written and pictorial formats. All complaints will be handled in line with this procedure and responded to promptly.

9. Mutual Exchange

Mutual exchanges are only permitted where the incoming tenant meets the relevant eligibility and allocation criteria for the property, including support needs and funding arrangements.

10. Monitoring and Review

- Rent and service charge data is monitored by the Housing Officer, Managing Director and Finance Lead
- The Board receives regular reports on rent levels, service charge breakdowns, and affordability trends
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if required by legislative or regulatory changes

Signed - Chair of Trustees:	
Print:	Mrs Sara Morrison
Date:	17 th November 2025