

WEST GRANTON HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

POLICY DOCUMENT

INFORMATION

This policy was approved by the Committee of Management on 9th November 2016.

It should be reviewed again no later than 2020.

WGHC aims to comply with all relevant legislation. The following legislative requirements have been considered in relation to this policy:

Data Protection Act

WGHC aims to comply with all relevant best practice. The following have been considered in relation to this policy:

The Scottish Social Housing Charter 2012

Open all Hours – a model publication framework - SFHA 2016

WGHC has a suite of policies and procedures covering all aspects of our operations. Those most closely linked with this policy are:

WGHC Governance Policy

WGHC ICT Procedures

WGHC Debit & Credit Card Security procedures

All policies and procedures are on the WGHC internal web site.

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1. Aims and Principles

The Co-operative aims to be open and accountable for what it does. This policy sets out how we will make information about our activities available; how we will safeguard information; and how we will respond to requests for disclosure of information. It includes the use of email and the internet.

In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter the Co-operative seeks to ensure that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with WGHC and get the information they need about WGHC, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Generally, WGHC tries to be very open about our activities and make information widely available. We will publish information on our activities in leaflets, newsletters and annual reports. We are also happy to release information on request about our activities if the request is reasonable.

However, we must also ensure that we do not disclose personal information about tenants and other data subjects and that we protect sensitive financial and business information.

WGHC is not subject to the Freedom of Information Scotland Act. However, we will try to make as much information as we can as widely available as we can and to respond to reasonable requests for additional information.

2. Responsibility & Authority

WGHC policies must be approved by the Committee of Management.

Minor amendments or updates to policy may be made by the CEO within the limits set out in WGHC's Governance Policy.

Operational procedures, in line with policy, may be approved by the CEO.

The Housing Manager will be primarily responsible for making relevant information about the Co-operative available. The focus will be very much on providing accessible, relevant information to our members and their households.

The CEO will be primarily responsible for information security and for registration under the Data Protection Act.

The CEO must authorise the release of business information.

The CEO or Housing Manager must authorise the release of personal data to the data subject or third parties.

4. Information

4.1. Information made widely available

WGHC will strive to achieve implementation of the SFHA model publication framework. The SFHA has recognised that this is challenging for small organisations and the amount of information we make available will be proportional to our size and limited resources.

The Housing Manager has responsibility for tenant information and will act as WGHC's Publication Framework Co-ordinator.

In accordance with recommended practice we will use our website as the main method of publication. However, we recognise not all our members have internet access and will continue to also use letters, leaflets, newsletters etc. to disseminate information.

On our website we will publish and keep up to date information in the following categories:

- About us – structure, governance and membership;
- Decision making – role of committee and recent committee decisions;
- Finance – income and expenditure;
- Services – what we do and how to contact us
- Who we work with – contractors
- Performance – performance information, complaints & appeals;
- Policies – key WGHC policies.

4.2. Information we will provide to new tenants

WGHC will provide new and prospective tenants with relevant information about the Co-operative and their tenancy. This information should include:

- Tenancy Agreement;
- Information on the Right to Buy;
- Guide to our Complaints Procedures;
- The Registered Rules of WGHC;
- Guide to WGHC and its Committee of Management;
- Tenant Handbook.

4.4. Translation

Where WGHC receives a reasonable request, it will where practical use interpreting services.

Where WGHC receives a reasonable request, it will where practical make efforts to translate key documents into another language and/or into alternative formats to meet the needs of people with disabilities. For lengthy documents, only summaries will be considered.

In determining what is reasonable and practical WGHC will consider:

- the relevance and importance of the document to the person making the request;
- the difficulty and costs involved in obtaining an accurate translation;
- the availability of other options for example the assistance of other agencies.

Where there is doubt, the HM or CEO is authorised to determine whether a request is reasonable and whether translation is practical.

4.5. Annual Information

In accordance with our rules we will provide information to tenants prior to the Annual General Meeting including:

- Annual report;
- Annual financial statements;
- AGM agenda, minutes & reports.

We will also provide an Annual Report on the Charter (ARC) to tenants by the end of October each year. The ARC will contain a summary of how WGHC has performed in relation to key performance indicators issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

4.6. Periodic Information

WGHC will periodically produce leaflets and guides about housing related topics. We also receive leaflets from other agencies about housing or local issues. These will be displayed or distributed in the most appropriate ways.

We shall issue information periodically about new proposals and issues of concern. The principal methods will be by personal letter or personal contact. Our quarterly newsletters are another popular way of receiving general information.

5. Information Security

5.1. Access to and use of data within WGHC

WGHC will seek to use and disclose information about data subjects amongst staff only as is reasonable. Information should only be accessible to those to whom it is of use in the course of their work. However, given the small number of staff and extent of generic working it is recognised that barriers to information, especially relating to tenants, is often impractical.

Both staff and committee members must not disclose any personal information about data subjects to which they have access to any other person except as permitted by this policy. This respect for confidentiality is also highlighted in other WGHC policies and in the Staff and Committee Codes of Conduct.

The Committee of Management's role is strategic rather than operational. Committee will not have access to personal information about other tenants, staff and other data subjects.

Disclosure of information about individuals to Committee members will only be made when it is necessary (e.g. disciplinary hearings, membership applications). Such disclosure should be limited to the information necessary for the task in hand.

In the case of appeals or complaints or disciplinary cases being heard by the Committee or a Subcommittee: where practical names and addresses and other information which would identify an individual will not be disclosed in reports.

In some cases, given WGHC's relatively small stock and small number of staff, it is accepted that it may be effectively impossible not to identify an individual, especially where the individual puts their case in person. However, Committee members are at all times bound to act impartially and to disclose any personal interest.

5.3. Use of Network, Internet & Email

5.3.1. Procedures

WGHC uses computers to store information and the internet to access and broadcast information and, through email, for communication.

The CEO will issue **WGHC ICT Procedures** setting out detailed guidance on the use of Information and Communication Technology including telephones, computers, email and the internet in relation to work.

WGHC reserves the right to monitor, access, review, audit, copy, store or delete any telephone, internet and email communications to ensure that the facilities are not being abused.

WGHC also reserves the right to withdraw access to telephones, email and internet. Abuse of the facilities may also result in disciplinary action.

5.3.2. Network and Back up

WGHC will use passwords and other forms of security, as appropriate and practical, to reduce the risk of computer files being accessed improperly.

Computer files will be regularly backed up and copies stored away from the WGHC office. WGHC will use anti-virus software and other measures to try to ensure that files are not infected by viruses or similar problems and that we do not spread such problems.

5.3.3. Telephones & Internet

Staff may use telephones (for local calls), access the internet, use social media or send emails for personal use only during lunch breaks or before or after their working day as entered on their timesheet. Outside these times they should only use any of these facilities for personal business in the event of a very urgent matter which cannot reasonably wait.

Staff should not post any information or comments regarding WGHC, colleagues or service users on social media. This applies at all times and in all media whether at work or in the employees own time.

Staff must not use these facilities to access pornography or to send harassing, abusive or offensive messages. Staff must not use them for personal commercial purposes. Staff must not telephone long distance or premium rate numbers without the consent of a senior staff member.

5.3.4. Emails

Staff's work email addresses must not be used to subscribe to or access any internet sites or services.

Business emails should use personal information only when necessary. All emails should carry the disclaimer below, or such revised or updated disclaimer as the HM or CEO may advise.

"This message is only for the use of the intended recipient(s). It may contain information that is privileged and confidential within the meaning of applicable law. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender as soon as possible. The views expressed in this communication are not necessarily those held by West Granton Housing Co-operative Limited."

5.4. Banking

The CEO is responsible for procedures and security in relation to electronic banking.

Staff will use access to electronic banking only as authorised. Passwords should be kept secure. Passwords should not be disclosed to any other person including any other members of staff unless authorised by the CEO.

WGHC accepts debit card payments in person and by telephone. Staff must abide by **WGHC's Payment Card Security Procedures** which comply with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

In particular:

- WGHC will not keep any records, written or electronic, of card account numbers, CVV/CVC (the number on the back of cards) or PIN;
- Cardholder copies of payment card transactions which are not wanted by the customer should be destroyed.
- Merchant copies of payment card transactions will be held securely and will not be held for more than 30 months. On expiry of this period, they will be disposed of securely.

6. Data Protection

6.1. Data Protection Act (DPA)

WGHC will strive to keep information we hold on individuals confidential wherever possible and carry out our obligations under the Data Protection Act (DPA).

WGHC will not normally release information about individuals to third parties unless it is permissible under the DPA and it is reasonable to do so in pursuance of normal activities or we are legally obliged to do so.

WGHC will endeavour to keep all information, whether held electronically or in hard copy, as secure as possible. Detailed procedures in relation to our data handling procedures including the use of email and the internet; and our obligations under the Data Protection Act are set out in Appendix 1 Information Protection and the Data Protection Act.

6.2. Data Protection Principles

As required in the DPA, WGHC is registered with the UK Information Commissioner's Office. The entry is reviewed and renewed on an annual basis.

The entry sets out the type of information held and to whom it may be released.

Information will be managed in accordance with the Data Protection principles as follows – data should be:

- Fairly and lawfully processed;
- Obtained & used only for specified & lawful purposes;
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- Accurate and up to date;
- Not kept longer than necessary;
- Processed in accordance with the data subject's rights under the act;
- Secure;
- Not sent to parties in other countries, unless that country gives adequate protection.

6.3. Data Audit

The CEO will be responsible for registration and will conduct a regular data audit which will include production of a data schedule. The Data Schedule will cover:

- the data subject groups (e.g. tenants, former tenants, employees, committee members, contractors etc.);
- the types of information held;
- the purpose of holding the information;
- the length of time information is retained;
- location and security of information.

The data audit will be used to check compliance with this policy and data protection principles. Where appropriate information will be permanently and properly destroyed. Destruction will be logged in a data register.

7. Requests for Information

7.1. Access to Business Information

WGHC's Tenant Participation Strategy sets out a range of information which will be given to tenants of WGHC.

This information is released in various accessible forms including our web site, tenant handbooks, newsletters and annual reports. Printed copies of information on the web site will also be available, on request, to any interested party.

WGHC will also provide specific information about our activities on request to individuals or groups except where:

- the information contains personal information about individuals;
- the information is commercially sensitive;
- repeated requests for the same or similar information is made by an individual or group or members of a group;
- disclosure would be unlawful or unreasonable.

Requests for information about the activities of WGHC which has not been made generally available (e.g. on our web site) must be put to the CEO for approval. The CEO will consider whether it is reasonable for WGHC to release the information. If necessary he will take legal advice.

Information will normally be released within one month. If the information (e.g. committee minutes) contains some information which the CEO believes should not be disclosed under the terms of this policy it may be redacted or summarised.

If the information is wholly or largely information which the CEO believes should not be disclosed under the terms of this policy the request will be refused.

There will normally be no charge for information unless there is a specific cost to WGHC in finding or publishing the information in which case a reasonable payment may be required in advance.

7.3. Access to data by data subject

A data subject is anyone about whom WGHC holds personal information. This includes tenants, former tenants, applicants for housing, employees, former employees and applicants for employment.

The data subject normally has the right of access to such information unless it is specifically exempt under the Data Protection Act. The main exception is where information would identify or give information about a third party. Such information will not be released unless the third party has consented to its release or (exceptionally) where it is reasonable to do so without consent. The information may be redacted.

Request for access to information must be made in writing. If the request is from someone acting for the data subject an acceptable form of mandate from the data subject must also be submitted.

Release of personal data must be authorised by the Housing Manager or CEO. The information should be released within one month. No charge will be made.

7.4. Access to data by third parties

WGHC may enter data sharing protocols with other relevant agencies, for example about access to information on former offenders. WGHC may also receive requests for information from other third parties.

WGHC will strive to keep all personal information relating to data subjects confidential unless its release is permitted in the terms of WGHC's current registration under the DPA or it falls within one of the legal exemptions provided for under the DPA which are summarised below:

- To safeguard national security
- Information for taxation purposes
- To enable the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders
- Information for the discharge of a regulatory activity, such as protecting members of the public against dishonesty, malpractice or seriously improper conduct of professional persons, or for securing the health, safety and welfare of persons at work
- Processing only for the purposes of journalism, literature or art or for research, history or statistical purposes
- Information available to the public under enactment
- Disclosures required by law or in connection with legal proceedings
- Confidential references given by the data controller
- To prevent prejudice to the combat effectiveness of the armed forces
- processing for the appointment of judges, Queen's Counsel and honours, for management forecasting, or in connection with a corporate finance service
- to prevent prejudice to negotiations
- Information covered by legal professional privilege
- To avoid self-incrimination.

Release of data to third parties must be authorised by the Housing Manager or CEO.