



**West
Granton**

Housing Co-op
sustaining and championing
the co-operative way

AUTUMN 2020

newsletter



Welcome to our Autumn 2020 Newsletter

COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges for us all.

I know this has been and continues to be an extremely difficult time for you and your families.

As we move through the different phases of restrictions, we at WGHC are continuing to keep essential services going.

The efforts tenants are making to ensure their rent is paid during this period is much appreciated. Please continue to do so if you are able. If you have difficulty paying your rent at any time please contact a member of our Housing Management Team immediately. We can also make a referral

for you to our Welfare Rights Advisor who provides a free and confidential service for WGHC Tenants.

Although our office remains closed to the public, staff are still working. We are here to help you as much as we can through this challenging period so please don't hesitate to get in touch. You can contact staff by phone on **0131 551 5035** or by email at mail@westgrantonhc.co.uk

I hope you all stay safe and well. We will provide regular service updates on our website at www.westgrantonhousing.coop



CEO, Larke Adger

Emergency Repairs

Whilst the office is closed please telephone your emergency repairs through to Hanover Telecare on **0800 917 8039**.

Gas Emergencies

Lothian Gas on **0131 440 4666**

Please remember to only report **emergency** repairs outwith normal working hours.



Universal Credit



Q. How do I make a claim for universal credit?

A. Claims can be made online by accessing <https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

You will need to create a username, password and answer two security questions. You will then be sent a code by email which you need to enter in the appropriate box which will then allow you to complete your claim. You must provide details of your rent and service charge amounts separately on the claim to confirm your total monthly rent charge.

Couples need to make individual claims to Universal Credit so you will both need to have email addresses and create passwords and security questions. Although the claims are made individually, they must be made at the same time and the claims are joined together for entitlement purposes.

The Citizens Advice Bureau's "Help to Claim" service can support you in the early stages of your Universal Credit claim, from the application, through to your first payment. Their National helpline number is **0800 023 2581**. WGHC's Housing Management Team are also available to help you with any questions you may have.

Q. Does WGHC have its own Benefits Advisor?

A. Yes it does! And what's more the service is independent, confidential and free to WGHC tenants.

WGHC has its own Benefits (Welfare Rights Advisor).

This is a free and completely confidential service for WGHC tenants.

If you think you might be missing out on benefits you may be entitled to or are looking for help in appealing a benefits decision, or are in need of a benefit health check, please ask a member of our Housing Management Team to refer you to our Benefits Advisor. The Advisor works on behalf of the tenant and not WGHC. This means that only if the tenant gives their explicit consent to the Advisor, will she be able to share any information with WGHC. Normally all WGHC does is make the referral and our involvement ends there. To access this service please telephone **0131 551 5035** or email us at hm@westgrantonhc.co.uk

Prepay Meters – Self Isolation & Financial Difficulties

Self-isolating can be a problem if you have a pre-payment meter, which requires you to go to the shop to top-up. If you are self-isolating, you should contact your energy company as soon as you become aware of an issue to do with your prepay meter, as some of the solutions can take a few days.

Smart Meter Top Up

If you are struggling financially due to working restrictions, your energy supplier may be able to top up your meter if it is an emergency situation.

Electricity key or gas card top up

You can pay your supplier directly by phone and they will then send a special code to a pay-point near to you. This code can then be picked up by family or friends. If you don't have anyone who can do this for you, your supplier may be able to send a key or card to your home that will allow you to top up.

Smoke Alarms and Changes to the Law

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London, the Scottish Government introduced a new Tolerable Standard for fire and smoke alarms. **This will become law in Scotland on 1st February 2021**. WGHC are currently in the process of making all our homes compliant as we must meet this deadline. We have employed the services of R.B.Grant to undertake this work. It is absolutely essential that tenants allow the contractor access to allow the upgrading works to be carried out.

Please help us meet our legal requirements

Whilst most tenants have been excellent in allowing works to be carried out, we do have a small number who have repeatedly denied the contractor access. If WGHC are continually refused access to carry out the required works we will force entry to the property and recharge the tenant for the cost of this work.

Appointments can be made directly with the contractor R.B.Grant by telephoning **01592 654 553** or by email to info@rbgrant.co.uk

What is the Priority Services Register?

Heating & Energy

If you're finding it difficult to manage your energy supply, the Priority Services Register (PSR) may be of interest. This free service helps vulnerable customers with extra support. Read on for our guide to the PSR, including which services are provided and how to apply.

Devised and managed by industry regulator Ofgem, the PSR is a free service that gives vulnerable customers access to the support they need.

The type of support will depend largely on the individual's circumstances as well as what's offered

by each supplier. It could include everything from quarterly meter readings to free gas safety checks, meter relocations, and large-format or Braille bills. Individuals on the Priority Services Register can also expect advanced notices of interruptions to their service, and priority during a power cut.



For further information contact our Housing Management Team or log onto <https://www.saveonenergy.com/uk/guides/priority-services-register>

Free Books for Under Fives

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting programme that delivers free, high-quality books to children every month from birth until aged five. WGHC is pleased to be a local partner bringing the programme to the children of our tenants.

How does it work?

Each month, enrolled children receive a high quality, age appropriate book in the post, free of charge. Children receive books every month from birth to age 5.

How much does it cost?

It is **FREE** for WGHC tenants.

Who is eligible?

All children under the age of 5, registered as living in a WGHC tenancy.

How can I apply?

Complete a registration form for each child who is under the age of 5.

Registration Forms are available to download from our website www.westgrantonhousing.coop or you can request a form to be sent out to you by phoning our office on **0131 551 5035**.

When will I start receiving books?

You will start to receive books 6-8 weeks after your registration form has been received. Books will be arriving at your home and will continue until your child turns 5 or you move out of your WGHC tenancy. You can cancel at any time. Contact our Housing Management Team on **0131 551 5035** if you require further information.



Foodbank

We understand it's a challenging time for everyone at the moment and recognise that it can be a struggle affording even the essentials for your and your family just now. Did you know that WGHC is a member of the Trussel Trust who have a number of foodbanks in North Edinburgh and City Wide. Please don't be stuck. We are here to help. To receive vouchers, please contact a member of the Housing Management Team on **0131 551 5035**.



Online Benefits Calculator

You could be missing out on financial help available to you through welfare benefits or grants. This free and easy-to-use benefits calculator, provided by **Turn2us**, can help you check what you might be able to claim or apply for. Log onto: <https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou>





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e mail@westgrantonhc.co.uk

w www.westgrantonhousing.coop

Out-of-office emergencies: 0800 917 8039

Committee Matters

**The Committee of Management of WGHC is its Board of Directors.
As a fully mutual co-operative, all WGHC Committee Members are tenants.**

As at October 2020, WGHC had 11 full serving Members.

If you have the time to volunteer and would enjoy a governance role why not think about joining us?
Induction and training are given. Contact us to find out more.

Since since our last newsletter in June 2020 there are many of us who thought we would be easing out of some of the lockdown restrictions by now. However, it appears that we may remain in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government route map over the duration of the winter months and possibly into early Spring 2021.

Despite the ongoing pandemic and government restrictions, Committee must continue with their responsibilities and they recognise the expectations put on them by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator to ensure that WGHC continues to deliver essential services to tenants and that the Co-op continues to meet all of its legal and regulatory requirements.

With this in mind Committee have been continuing to hold their monthly meetings. Unusually Committee met in July (which is usually a holiday month for meetings) and also in August and September. Over the quarter they have been closely monitoring the effect COVID-19 has been having on our cash flow and our tenants' ability to pay rents. During this period Committee approved for WGHC to provide its own Welfare Rights Advisor to help WGHC tenants maximise their income and access any benefits to which they may be entitled. This will prove more vital than ever as the current furlough scheme comes to an end and government restrictions on the hospitality industry tighten further. This new service started in August. Committee also met with our Financial Auditor to approve the Annual Financial Statements and our Five Year Financial Projections; both of which must now be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

In addition, the AGM was held virtually in September. Lockdown restrictions made a physical AGM event illegal so Committee and Members took to Zoom to attend this year's AGM. With both virtual attendees and proxies, we had 36 members in attendance which meant we achieved quorate (the required number is 28). We are delighted to announce we have 3 Committee members who were newly elected and we also had a change in Chair and Vice Chair.

Following the September AGM, your Committee of Management is as follows:

Fiona Marshall (Chairperson)

Lorna Brown (Vice Chair)

Marilyn Dickson (Treasurer)

Amanda Aitchison **Donna Anderson**

Jon Douglas **Colin Fraser**

Joe Moir **Wendy Riordan**

Liz Robertson **George Thomson**

Finally, we appreciate it is a difficult time for us all. Please be assured we are here to help you. We understand we cannot assist you in everything, but we will try our best to provide support and information during this time. Do not hesitate to contact WGHC staff to discuss any concerns you may have. We hope that you and your families stay safe and well. We will continue to provide tenants with service updates via our website.

**You can find a copy of the Minutes of
WGHC Committee Meetings on our website
www.westgrantonhousing.coop**