



**West
Granton**

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

WINTER 2020

newsletter



Welcome to our Winter 2020 Newsletter

Although our office remains closed to the public, please be assured staff are all still working, either in the office on a rotational basis or from home.

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**

We will continue to provide regular service updates on our website at **www.westgrantonhousing.coop**

WGHC would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Staff will be on holiday from 4.00pm on **Wednesday 23rd December 2020** until 9.15am on **Monday 4th January 2021**.

During this time period our phone lines will be closed **EXCEPT** for those emergency repairs over the Christmas and New Year period.

Emergency Repairs over the Festive Period

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

Gas Central Heating Emergencies



Kingdom Gas on **01334 650452** OR **0800 3899 463**.

Please remember to only report **emergency** repairs over the holiday period.

Accessing Financial Help



Q. Are Crisis Grants available in Edinburgh for tenants?

A. Yes

The Poverty & Inequality

Commission has

highlighted that the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) has been **underspent** during the pandemic and notes that less money has been paid out than in the same period of 2019 and proportionately only 15% of the budget has been spent during 25% of the year.

This report emphasises that **there is money available for people in need. Edinburgh has paid out far more Crisis Grants than in previous times and awards have been higher on average so it is worth making an application.** It's best to phone **0131 529 5299** though you can also make a claim online at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/benefits-grants/scottish-welfare-fund

The Scottish WELFARE FUND

Q. Can I apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment?

A. Yes, if you have an entitlement to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

If you rent your home, and you get **Housing Benefit** or **Universal Credit**, but still can't afford your housing costs, you may be eligible for a Discretionary Housing Payment.

A Discretionary Housing Payment can be made if you:

- claim Housing Benefit but it doesn't cover all your rent
- claim Universal Credit but still can't afford your housing costs
- need help with removal costs
- need help with a rent deposit

To find out if you are eligible and how to apply online log onto www.edinburgh.gov.uk/discretionaryhousingpayments Speak to a member of our Housing Management Team on **0131 551 5035** if you would like assistance in making a claim. Please remember we are here to help where possible.

Q. How can I get a food parcel from the local Foodbank?

A. Email or telephone WGHC for vouchers



West Granton Housing Co-op is an official referral agency for the North Edinburgh Foodbank. To discuss further or make a request please do not hesitate to contact a member of our Housing Management Team on **0131 551 5035** or by email at mail@westgrantonhc.co.uk We appreciate it can be difficult to ask for help sometimes but please recognise that staff are here to help our tenants access all points of help and support and treat all requests with sensitivity and confidentiality. So, don't be stuck – get in touch and let us help if we can.

Your Rent Payments over the Holiday Period

Your home is important

We know Christmas puts a strain on your budget, but do think twice about delaying your rent payments.

Every year, some people opt for a quick fix at Christmas thinking it will help them out short term – but then really struggle to catch up in the New Year.

WGHC tenants have made amazing efforts this year to keep up to date with rent payments. Please continue to support your Co-op and make your rent payments on time.

If you really can't pay, contact us as soon as possible. We can help you maximise your benefits and signpost you to Welfare Rights assistance for support and financial advice.





Maintenance News

Some WGHC Tenants have recently asked us why has WGHC changed its Gas Contractor. Here we explain why.

In accordance with Scottish Government Guidance, WGHC, along with other Scottish social landlords are expected to regularly put their contracts for service works out to tender on the open market. This is to help us achieve value for money by ensuring that we are continuing to buy in the most efficient and economical service available to us.

This means sometimes we have to bring contracts to an end even though we are happy with the service provided by the existing contractor. If we didn't go out to tender regularly we would not be able to test if we were continuing to receive value for money. As it is tenants' rents that pay for these services, we have a responsibility that we are spending this money well.

Kingdom Gas – New Gas Servicing & Repair Contractor for WGHC



With this in mind, WGHC recently had to put the Gas Servicing and Repair contract out for tender. This contract was advertised through **Public Contracts Scotland**. WGHC received 3 tenders. All tenders were checked using a quality/price assessment. **Kingdom Gas** was awarded the contract based on this assessment.

As of the 1st of December 2020, WGHC changed the contractor that we use to carry out the gas appliance servicing and repairs. For further information about Kingdom Gas please log onto <https://kingdomgas.co.uk> To access their Out of Hours Emergency Repairs service please telephone **0800 3899 463 OR 01334 650452**.



Electrical Inspections Programme

An electrical inspection condition report (EICR) is an inspection of your property's electrical systems and installation.

WGHC has appointed a contractor called **Saltire** to carry out an EICR in your home.

It will take approximately 1.5-2.5 hours to carry out this work.

These inspections should be carried out every five years. If **your home** needs to have this inspection done, **Saltire** will contact you **directly** to arrange suitable access.

Gas Boiler Replacement Works

WGHC plans to replace the gas boilers in the following streets: **Craigmuir Place, West Pilton Park** and **Ferry Road Avenue**. We are currently in the process of selecting a contractor after carrying out a competitive tendering process. WGHC will send a letter to each of the tenants in these areas to advise of the outcome, once this process has been completed.





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West Granton Housing Co-op | 26 Granton Mill Crescent | Edinburgh EH4 4UT

t 0131 551 5035

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 December 2020, WGHC has 10 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.

Despite our office being closed to the public and Scottish Government restrictions, the WGHC Committee of Management has been continuing to meet virtually each month to ensure the Co-op maintains its level of governance and ensure we continue to meet our legal and regulatory standards.

Since the last newsletter, Committee have continued to monitor the cash flow for the organisation and rent arrears levels. They have approved the award of the gas safety contract to Kingdom Gas, approved our revised Financial Regulations and Standing Orders Policy, authorised the CEO to submit the Audited Financial Statements Return and the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator and approved a tenant consultation for a proposed rent increase of 0.7% for 2021-22.

Due to the pandemic this year, we have been unable to hold the Annual Christmas Painting Competition. Committee therefore took the decision to donate £3,000 this Christmas to various local community charities including the North Edinburgh Foodbank. The decision to make donations to a number of local charities was very much taken in mind of WGHC tenants and residents of the local community who will have been affected by the current pandemic.

In addition, WGHC's Committee of Management elected Wendy Riordan as Chairperson in October 2020.

Your Committee of Management is as follows:

Wendy Riordan (Chairperson)

Lorna Brown (Vice Chair)

Marilyn Dickson (Treasurer)

Amanda Aitchison

Donna Anderson

Jon Douglas

Colin Fraser

Joe Moir

Wendy Riordan

Liz Robertson

George Thomson

Committee will next meet on 16th December 2020 when they will receive and consider the feedback from the tenant consultation on the proposed rent increase for next year.

We continue to 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**

