



West Granton

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

SUMMER 2021

newsletter

Social Housing Fuel Support Fund



FINAL CALL – Claim your £30 Fuel Poverty Payments by 30th June

As the result of a £2million grant awarded to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations by the Scottish Government, West Granton Housing Co-operative secured funding to provide **£30** to each of our tenancy properties.

The grant stipulated that this should be used for the purchase of, or payment toward, Gas or Electricity. As this was a grant, we were obliged to prove that the funding had been correctly, fairly and accurately awarded.

To date, we have been able to provide payment directly to the bank account details of **203** of our tenants, with a further **57** tenants electing to receive the money in cash. This is fantastic and

has provided some help to many of our tenants who needed a little boost during the pandemic.

However, this means that 111 of our tenants have not responded to the offer and are yet to receive the payment. Because there were stringent measures put in place by the funders of the grant, we are obliged to return any unused funds.

Therefore, by virtue of this article and via a notification that will be published on our website, the **CLOSING DATE** for applications to receive the £30 will be set at **30 June 2021**. Any applications received after this date will not be paid and any monies left from the grant will be returned to the funders.

Emergency Repairs

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



Emergency Heating Repairs Kingdom Gas on 01334 650452

Remember only report **EMERGENCY** repairs during lockdown.

10 Free Chromebooks up for grabs!

Helping WGHC Tenants with Digital Inclusion

Through the Community Recovery Fund provided by the Scottish Government, WGHC worked in partnership with other local, RSLs from the ARCHIE alliance in order to secure funding to provide some Chromebooks to tenants who might otherwise be 'digitally excluded'.

We obtained 25 Chromebooks and the Committee of Management have decided that 15 should be set aside specifically for those tenants identified as being most in need with digital inclusion.

This leaves 10 x Chromebooks available and up for grabs on a 'first come, first served' basis. Get in touch with the office if you would like to receive one of the Chromebooks on offer.

All recipients of a Chromebook will be required to sign an agreement with regard to the expected use of the equipment confirming they will not be used to view illegal, inappropriate or harmful content. Equally, they must not be sold. The Chromebooks are provided without warranty or recourse to WGHC. A further article will also be posted on the WGHC website.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Have you carried out Alterations and Improvements to your Tenancy?

It is a term of every Scottish secure tenancy that the tenant is not to carry out work, other than interior decoration, in relation to the house without the consent in writing of the landlord, which must not be unreasonably withheld. (Section 28, Housing Scotland Act (2001))

We recently wrote out to all tenants to let them know that it had come to our attention a number of alterations had been carried out during lockdown, without our permission. This came to light after a number of tenants had written to us asking for permission to carry out an alteration or improvement in their home. To those tenants, we gave permission and in some cases we had to ask for certain conditions to be met. Some tenants thought it was unfair to have conditions attached to their permission because they told us others had carried out similar alterations but had not sought our permission and therefore did not have any conditions imposed upon them.

We recognise that this is unfair and that we have to be consistent and ask the same of every tenant. The letter we sent to each tenant was a reminder that our written permission must be given before



any improvements or alterations are carried out to tenancies. In some cases we can also give retrospective permission. And remember for some improvements, we may pay up to £300 to the tenant at the end of their tenancy. However certain conditions must be met first. For more details ask at our office or log onto <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2002/312/made>

So remember, please always seek our written permission first.

15 x Energy Efficiency Bags up for grabs!

West Granton Housing Co-operative working in partnership with Prospect Community HA, Lister HC, Viewpoint HA and Manor Estates HA (all in the ARCHIE alliance) sourced funding from the Scottish Government from its Community Recovery Fund. The overall bid comprised a mix of different supplies of practical energy conservation items, tablets to assist with digital access, and debt advice working in partnership with the Community Help & Advice Initiative (CHAI) in Edinburgh.

WGHC's secured funding for a bag of energy conservation items for 50 tenants.

The bags consist of a 13w LED light bulb, a radiator reflective panel, a fabric 'sausage dog' draught excluder for a door, an 'auto off' countdown power timer and a sheet of energy advice tips. Of the 50 'Goody Bags**' available, the Committee of Management decided that 35 should be set aside for distribution to tenants identified as being in the most need of these items.

This leaves 15 'Goody Bags' available on a 'first come, first served' basis, i.e. once they're gone... They're gone!**

Get in touch with the office if you would like to receive one of the goody bags on offer.

* WGHC provide no warranties to the contents of the Goody Bag and they are provided in good faith.



Setting up a No Cold Calling Zone within WGHC Streets

A No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ) is about helping local residents and communities to have the confidence to say "NO" to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are not welcome.

In order for a No Cold Calling Zone to be set up within the streets of West Granton Housing Co-op, we

need the majority of tenants to agree to the initiative.

We will shortly send out a separate letter explaining a bit more about the scheme together with a form for tenants to complete and return. Depending on the response, we would be hoping to move this project forward. Watch out for this letter coming soon!

Review of our Allocations Policy

We recently reviewed our Allocations Policy. In particular we looked at how we award priority to WGHC Internal Transfer tenants. Using the outcome of the tenant consultation we carried out back in 2019 together with a view to making the policy easier to read and understand, the Committee of Management approved the revised policy at their meeting in April 2021. One of the main changes with internal transfer applications is that we now have more discretion to look at how moving a person to another property will improve their quality of life and help with their

medical condition; and not just simply prioritise all applications in the date on which they are received. This should help us to be able to successfully re-house first, those tenants who are in emergency need of re-housing. A copy can be found on our website at www.westgrantonhousing.coop and we can also arrange to send out a copy in the post. Simply contact our office with your request to receive a copy or discuss the changes by phoning 0131 551 5035. We have already sent a letter out to all those tenants currently sitting on our Internal Transfer Waiting List.

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 well as this quarterly report in the Newsletter you can also find a copy of the Minutes of every Committee Meeting from April 2020 on our web site www.westgrantonhousing.coop

There have been a further 2 Committee Meetings since the Spring Newsletter. At the April meeting Committee approved the revision of the WGHC Allocations Policy, received feedback on the Annual Performance reviews for all Committee members, were advised on court action updates involving 2 WGHC tenancies (one current and one former) and received a further update about the vandalism to the lift at Colonsay Close. At the May meeting, Committee approved the Financial Audit Plan for our annual audit, the WGHC Annual Return on the Charter for the Scottish Housing Regulator. This is a report of our statistical performance over the past year including figures on how long it has taken us

to relet an empty property, carry out a emergency repair (etc), noted the outcomes of the 2021 Internal Audit, approved the new Information & Communications Technology Policy and approved the next meeting date for 23rd June 2021.

Committee receive a report at every meeting, of how much cash WGHC holds in its bank accounts. Cash flow is critical to the ongoing financial viability of the organisation.

We are always looking for new volunteers to join the Committee of Management. If you are interested please contact Larke Adger (CEO) or David Mills (Governance & Compliance Manager) for an informal chat. Alternatively we can arrange for you to meet with a Committee Member who will be happy to share with you their perspective of what this role involves. Email: mail@westgrantonhc.co.uk or phone: **0131 551 5035**.

Staffing Update

WGHC currently have two staff members from our Housing Management Team on long term absence. We have therefore recently agreed a temporary contract with EVH (Employers in Voluntary Housing) to provide us with a part-time Housing Officer to concentrate on tenancy sustainment and support work.

Rhona Cameron will start with WGHC on Monday 14th June 2021 for a 6 month period, initially. If you would like to make an



Rhona Cameron



Lorraine Gahagan



Sheena Farrell

appointment for Rhona to visit you at home or phone you please call our office on 0131 551 5035 and we will book you an appointment.

Lorraine Gahagan is WGHC's permanent, full time Housing Officer and is here to help you with any tenancy related matter, as is **Sheena Farrell** (our Housing Assistant).