



WGHC

Our tenants are paramount in everything we do

GARDEN AID / GRASS CUTTING SERVICES PROCEDURES 2024-25

This procedure was updated by the COO in March 2024. It should be reviewed again no later than mid-February 2025.

The policy has been assessed through the organisational impact assessment process.

We can, if requested, produce this document in different formats such as larger print or audio-format. We can also translate the document into various languages, as appropriate.

SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR STANDARDS

STANDARD 1

The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.

STANDARD 2

The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. Its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

STANDARD 3

The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.

STANDARD 4

The Governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

STANDARD 5

The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

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West Granton Housing Co-operative Limited is a fully mutual housing co-operative registered as a social landlord with the Scottish Housing Regulator (HAC 225); and is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (2357 RS).



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

WGHC's Committee of Management agreed on 9th July 2014:

- that Garden Aid / Grass Cutting Services are provided as an ongoing discretionary scheme for applicants who are over 75;
- or, who provide evidence that they are unable to maintain their garden.

The Garden Service is a basic grass cutting service for tenants whose households, through ill health or disability, are unable to maintain their gardens. This procedure sets out how WGHC will put this into practice.

1.1 Related Policy & Procedures

Tenant's obligations in relation to garden ground are set out in **Section 2.11** of the standard *WGHC Tenancy Agreement* including the following:

Where you have the exclusive use of the garden, you agree to keep the garden including footpaths and driveways in good and tidy order, free from weeds, free from litter and free of dog and other animal dirt. You agree to cut the grass at least every two weeks during the growing season between March and October.

You agree to cut hedges so that the hedges do not exceed one metre in height where the vision of motorists would be impeded and two metres elsewhere. You agree to use the garden ground for the purpose of a garden only. You must not top, lop, pollard or fell trees without our prior written consent. You must not remove, chop down or destroy any bushes or hedges without our prior written permission unless you planted them. You further agree to obtain our prior written permission and all other necessary approvals (for example Planning Permission) before erecting any structures (for example a shed or greenhouse) in the garden.

You shall keep fences or any other structure erected in good order.

If you fail to carry out these obligations, we are entitled to decide exactly what work requires to be done so as to comply with those duties. Before making our decision, we will consult you. Our decision will be binding on you. If you do not do the work contained in this paragraph, we may do it ourselves and charge you for it. This is in addition to any other legal remedies you may have. You hereby agree to pay for the cost of this work should we require to carry it out ourselves.

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Estate Management in relation to gardens is referred to in **Section 5.4** of the WGHC *Tenancy Management Policy* including the following:

WGHC will:

- carry out regular inspections of gardens, open spaces, common areas and the stairs within flatted developments.
- manage the environment around our properties and any common areas effectively to ensure that the neighbourhood is an attractive, well maintained and safe place to live.
- take reasonable and appropriate action against tenants who are not maintaining their gardens / property in a neat and tidy condition.

Staff may invite tenants to apply for the WGHC Garden Aid if they are experiencing difficulty in maintaining their gardens and the tenant satisfies the qualifying criteria for the service. For further information refer to WGHC's Garden Aid procedures.

2.0 ELIGIBILITY

WGHC will consider providing Garden Aid if the following conditions are met and continue to be met:

- The tenant is 75 years old or older; or
- the tenant has a disability or health condition which prevents them maintaining their garden;

AND

- there is no-one living in the household over 16 years of age who does not have a disability or health condition which prevents them maintaining the garden; and
- no other gardening assistance is being received (e.g. the Council's Garden Aid scheme);

The applicant must satisfy WGHC that the conditions apply. If one or more conditions cease to apply, WGHC may withdraw the Garden Aid (see Section 6).

2.1 Applying for Garden Aid

Tenants must apply for Garden Aid. WGHC is not obliged to provide Garden Aid. Provision of the service is at the discretion of WGHC. It is not a right under the tenancy agreement nor under any other agreements or legislation.

WGHC will publicise the scheme in our Newsletters. We will also raise it with individual tenants if they appear to qualify and have a need for assistance.

Tenants must complete an application form each year. Housing staff may assist the tenant in completing the form. In exceptional cases the Housing Manager is authorised to apply on behalf of a tenant where there is good reason to do so.

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WGHC may ask for evidence that the applicant is eligible for Garden Aid. If an applicant does not provide sufficient evidence following a request from WGHC then Garden Aid will not be provided.

If Garden Aid has already begun, WGHC will give notice that it will be withdrawn as set out in Section 6 below.

The Housing Manager will review all applications and make recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer who will decide whether Garden Aid will be provided. The COO must keep the CEO updated of numbers in receipt of the service.

2.2 Extent of Works

Works will be carried out by WGHC contractors. The Maintenance Team will be responsible for managing the contract.

Works will consist of grass cutting through the grass growing season, usually March to October. During those months, grass is cut approximately every two weeks. The number and timing of visits is dependent on the weather. There should also be an application of weed and feed at least once a year.

WGHC will also instruct pruning of trees, bushes or hedges in or overhanging a garden where and when it is considered necessary.

Garden Aid will **not** include:

- maintenance of flower beds,
- shrub beds,
- vegetable patches created by the tenant,
- general weeding,
- Weed removal from driveways / garden paths

WGHC will however be sympathetic to requests to remove and grass over or hard landscape over any such areas which the tenant can no longer maintain.

3.0 WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICE

WGHC also has the right to discontinue the provision of Garden Aid at any time either entirely or to individual tenants. If either of the following occur, no works will be carried out. If they re-occur, WGHC may withdraw the Garden Aid:

- the garden ground has deposits of dog or other animal faeces;
- the garden ground contains a dog or other animal when the grass is to be cut and the tenant does not remove it;
- the contractor is unable to safely access the garden ground;
- the tenant or members of the tenant's household or visitors are abusive or threatening to WGHC staff or the contractors working for WGHC.

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WGHC may also withdraw Garden Aid if the tenant ceases to be eligible in terms of section 2.1 above (for example if someone able bodied moves into the household or if the tenant recovers from a temporary medical condition).

A request to withdraw garden aid will be in the form of a written request to the Chief Operating Officer from the Housing Manager or Maintenance Team. A decision to withdraw Garden Aid will be made by the Chief Operating Officer after discussing each case with the CEO.

If Garden Aid is withdrawn the tenant becomes responsible for maintenance of the garden ground as set out in the tenancy agreement.

4.0 SHORT TERM AID

Where a tenant is hospitalised or for some other good reason is temporarily unable to maintain their garden WGHC, may instruct garden cuts or other works for a short period without charge. If the problem persists the tenant should be invited to apply for Garden Aid.

5.0 OTHER AGENCIES

Other agencies exist which may provide gardening assistance to tenants. WGHC is happy for tenants to get assistance from other agencies or individuals. Possible sources of aid include the City of Edinburgh Council Garden Aid scheme and organisations such as Edinburgh Garden Partners. The tenant will however remain responsible for the maintenance of the garden. The responsibility will not be passed to another agency or individual.

6.0 APPEALS & COMPLAINTS

Tenants may appeal against the following decisions:

- Refusal of an application for Garden Aid;
- Withdrawal of Garden Aid.

Procedures in relation to appeals are set out in WGHC's *Governance & Standing Orders Policy*.

Tenants may submit complaints about the Garden Aid service.

Procedures in relation to complaints are set out in WGHC's *Complaints Handling Policy*.

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