



Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) Assisted Gardening Policy

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| Date of approval | July 2024 |
| Responsible director | Executive Director – Customers and Communities |
| Policy monitoring body | Customer Experience Committee |
| Resident input into Policy date | Customer Experience Committee – July 2024 |
| Date for policy review | July 2027 |
| Linked strategies/policies | See Section 11 |
| Version/date | V 2 – July 2024 |
| Owner | Simon Melloy - Head of Housing Services |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wythenshawe was built to be a desirable garden city, with gardens, grassed verges, green spaces and many trees. Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) carries out a great deal of work across our neighbourhoods to ensure they are maintained to a high standard and the Neighbourhood Team work with customers to ensure the tenancy conditions are met and their gardens are well maintained. There are a number of residents who for reasons of vulnerability, ill health, disability or age are not able to carry out this work.
- 1.2 WCHG recognises that not every tenant is able to maintain their garden(s) to a standard that is acceptable under the conditions of their tenancy agreement. WCHG offers an assisted gardening service for those tenants and will operate an eligibility criterion to ensure those in the most need of the service are able to access it.
- 1.3 WCHG's desired outcome is that customers who are unable to fulfil the tenancy agreement obligation of maintaining their garden(s) through disability, ill health or any qualifying criteria are offered a service to ensure that this is carried out.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy will apply to all qualifying tenants of WCHG. Tenants who are in a market rent (Garden City Homes) property and shared owners are not qualifying tenants for the purposes of this policy.
- 2.2 This service is limited to a maximum number of tenants in any given year and the financial budget and resources that WCHG can allocate to this service, we are not able to offer this as a universal service too all.

3. Policy

- 3.1 Assisted gardening is the term used for garden services provided by the Group, free of charge, to eligible elderly or disabled tenants who are unable to carry out maintenance of their garden and have no family living locally who can assist or the financial means to pay for a gardening service themselves.

4. Services

- 4.1 Garden maintenance will be carried out by WCHG's Grounds Maintenance team for all eligible tenants. We will aim to carry out up to 8 visits per year to grass cut and trim during the main growing season from April to September. It must be noted that the cutting cycle may be affected by inclement weather.

4.2 Service Standards

- Grass cutting only
- Cut and drop service
- Grass cuttings will be blown from any pathways
- Allocated time is 20 minutes per cut
- Hedges will be cut a maximum of 2 times per year

4.2 Customers benefiting from the service must make sure that gardens are accessible for the work to be completed if they are not at the property. They must also make sure that gardens are free from dog or pet faeces. Failure to do so will result in the garden missing the cycle and not being completed until the next.

4.3 All tenants accepted onto the assisted gardening scheme will sign an agreement to confirm that they will abide by these terms and conditions.



4.4 A one off charge of £50.00 per year for the Assisted Gardening Service may be introduced from April 2026. An impact assessment of this possible future charge will be undertaken and presented to the Customer Experience Committee for a decision on future charging in Autumn 2025.

5. **Eligibility Criteria**

WCHG has adopted a strict eligibility criterion regarding who can apply for assistance with their garden so that we can provide help to those who are in the most need. The criteria for inclusion in to the scheme are as follows:

- All occupiers of the property are aged 70+ or otherwise infirm or
- The tenant is disabled and no one else lives in the property who is capable of garden maintenance or
- The tenant has no close relatives who are in a position to assist, living within a five-mile radius (Close relatives are defined as sons/daughters and parents if the applicant is disabled)
- Available for consideration to tenants who don't have the financial means to pay for a private gardening service to maintain their garden
- WCHG expects any member of the household or family aged 18 and over to carry out gardening

5.2 As well as the above criteria all applicants must also be able to provide us with medical evidence to qualify for the scheme. This will be proof of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance.

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- 5.3 Consideration will be given to applicants aged 85 and over who may not be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance but fulfil all other criteria.
- 5.4 Consideration will also be given to applicants who are regarded as being normally fit and healthy but who are temporarily incapacitated and unable to maintain their garden e.g. during a period of recuperation following an operation, illness or coping with mental health issues. This will be subject to appropriate medical evidence, if required, and each case will be considered on its own merits at the discretion of the Neighbourhood Housing Manager. In these circumstances WCHG may provide a one off or limited service offering.
- 5.5 The following are examples of where a member of a household would be considered as ineligible to be considered for this service:
- Hayfever
 - Allergies
 - Asthma
 - Vertigo
 - Repetitive strain injury
 - Depression
 - Taking medication that causes drowsiness
- 5.6 Medical letters can be accepted in some discretionary circumstances to allow applicants to access the service, for example:
- Epilepsy
 - Severe angina
 - Severe asthma
 - Heart disease
- 5.7 WCHG reserves the right to remove anyone from the list who no longer meets the eligibility criteria.
- 5.8 It is likely that WCHG will receive a number of applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria but where those tenants still feel they are unable to carry out gardening. In these instances, the tenant will be offered a range of options and this includes:
- Referral to WCHG's gardening tool hire scheme
 - Referral to the volunteer gardening service
 - Information regarding local private gardening services
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6. Demand

- 6.1 WCHG has an annual budget to deliver the service and will regularly monitor and review it to ensure we are meeting the demand for the service across WCHG. The Neighbourhood Team will carry out an annual review of the members of the scheme and ensure each household is still eligible to receive the assisted gardening service.
- 6.2 All new requests will be fully assessed and eligibility checked to ensure that all applicants meet the criteria as whilst WCHG recognises that this is a service that provides assistance to customers, we need to ensure we are providing a value for money service and remain within budget.
- 6.3 WCHG reserves the right to remove any customer from the list at any time. Reasons may include:
- A change in circumstance means they no longer meet the eligibility criteria
 - Non - compliance with all tenancy conditions
 - Repeated issues with not providing access for the work to be completed
 - Bulky items not cleared to enable the work to be completed
 - Dog and cat faeces not being cleared up prior to the operatives attending
 - Threats of or actual verbal or physical abuse towards the operatives

7. Responsibility for Garden Maintenance

- 7.1 The Garden Enforcement procedures will apply to ensure that an untidy individual garden does not affect the appearance of the area. The Neighbourhood Officer will have the discretion to consider WCHG's approach, dependent on the circumstances of the tenant when considering garden enforcement action.
- 7.2 WCHG will endeavour to carry out a one-off visit to these gardens if resources are available.
- 7.3 WCHG can refer residents to the tool hire scheme, volunteer gardening service and private gardening services if appropriate.

8. Responsibility

- 8.1 The Executive Director of Customers and Communities shall be responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

- 8.2 The Head of Housing Services will ensure that colleagues involved are trained in the implementation of this policy and any associated procedure.

9. Consultation, Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 The Assisted Gardening Policy will be reviewed every three years by the Customer Experience Committee with tenant consultation.
- 9.2 An annual update to the Customer Experience Committee will provide an assurance with our compliance with the policy. These will include but not be limited to:
- Number of customers accessing the service
 - Overall costs of the service
 - Case studies
 - The use of enforcement action where applicable
 - Equality, Diversity and inclusion indicators

10. Equality & Diversity

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out on this policy.
- 10.2 WCHG will ensure that the Assisted Gardening Policy is accessible to its diverse customers and will consider the different needs of customers when explaining the options available to them and in tailoring the service around customer need.

11. Associated Strategies and Policies

Tenancy Management Policy
Environmental Services Policy
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
Health and Safety Policy
Garden Enforcement Procedures
Value for Money Strategy
Living and Ageing Well Strategy
Community Safety Strategy
Complaints Policy