



# **GARDEN ASSISTANCE POLICY**

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Next Review: 2023**

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# **Garden Assistance Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to clearly set out the qualifying criteria for Rosehill's garden assistance service.
- 1.2 The objectives of this policy interlink with those of the Neighbourhood Management, Anti-Social and Equality and Diversity Policies.
- 1.3 Over 90% of Rosehill's housing stock are main door properties with front and back gardens. Rosehill recognises that some tenants, now or in the future, will experience difficulty in continuing to maintain their gardens through age related problems, ill health or a disability.
- 1.4 In an effort to alleviate these problems and to improve the overall appearance of Rosehill's area, a garden assistance service is provided.

## **2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework**

- 2.1 Rosehill has chosen to provide its own Garden Assistance Service and this is done in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy. As an employer, landlord, purchaser of goods and services, provider of services and in its dealings with other organisations, Rosehill has a legal and regulatory duty to ensure that it promotes equality and diversity in all aspects of its work.

### **2.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter**

- 2.2.1 The Social Housing Charter came into effect in April 2012 and this sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Charter replaces the Performance Standards and the outcomes relevant to this Policy are:

1. Equalities

Social Landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

## 2 Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

## 3. Participation

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

## 6 Estate Management, anti-social, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that tenants and other customers live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

## 13. Value for Money

Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

### **3. Qualifying Criteria**

3.1 To qualify for assistance the following criteria must be met:

3.1.1 The tenant must complete a medical self-assessment form to demonstrate that he/she is not medically fit (permanently/long term) to maintain his/her garden through reasons of age related problems, ill health or a disability.

3.1.2 The tenant has no means of access to support from family or other relatives living with him/her or living in the area. For the avoidance of doubt any joint tenants, spouses, partners or non-dependents within the household will be expected to provide the necessary support to the tenant by maintaining the garden **unless** it is determined, through a medical self-assessment that they are not medically fit to maintain the garden. For the purpose of this policy non-dependents are classed as 16 years old and over.

- 3.1.3 Tenants can not receive Rosehill's garden assistance service if they are receiving such a service by another agency e.g. the Council.
- 3.1.4 Rosehill will also provide garden assistance on a short term basis to any tenant who has just come out of hospital after receiving treatment or an operation which prevents them from maintaining their garden.
- 3.1.5 Rosehill will also provide a one off service to tenants who are on the waiting list but are struggling to manage aspects of garden maintenance. For example if the hedging has grown to such a height that it is proving difficult for the tenant to maintain Rosehill, as a one off, will cut down the hedging to a more manageable height.
- 3.1.6 Eligibility for short term or one off assistance will also be based on the aforementioned qualifying criteria. The short term assistance is defined as anything up to three months.

## **4. Garden Assistance Service**

### **4.1 Operation of Service**

- 4.1.1 As Rosehill funds the service direct, it is limited to a total number of 60 places. Tenants applying for and being eligible for garden assistance when the 60 places are full will then be placed on a waiting list. Applications will be held in date order.

### **4.2 Reviews**

- 4.2.1 To ensure that tenants who currently receive the service or are waiting to receive the service continue to qualify for assistance, a review will be carried out every two years. This will involve the tenants completing new application forms and if necessary new self-assessment forms.
- 4.2.2 In between reviews the tenants have a responsibility to advise Rosehill of any change in their circumstances which may affect their eligibility for garden assistance e.g. if anyone has moved in with them who is able to maintain the garden.

### **4.3 Service Provided**

- 4.3.1 The service will operate during the growing season i.e. normally April to October. It relates to front, side and rear gardens and will consist of the following:
- Mow grass areas and all arisings removed (twice per month).
  - Strim Grass edges and all arisings removed ( twice per month).

- Fork over soft landscape once per month and trim back shrubs as required and all arisings to be removed.
- Trim privet hedges front, rear and side (if applicable) (once per month), and all arising to be removed.
- Clear Litter generally (twice per month).

## **5. Value for Money**

- 5.1 The Garden Assistance Service forms part of the Open Space Maintenance Contract. In order to ensure that the costs we incur remain competitive we will tender these works in accordance with our Purchasing, Procurement and Tenders Policy every 3 or 4 years. The tendering process will be subject to a “best value” basis selection considering both the quality and price of the tenders. This enables the best price possible to be obtained while protecting the quality of the service.
- 5.2 To ensure that tenants are receiving a good quality service, Rosehill will obtain feedback from tenants through quality satisfaction surveys, which will be conducted during the growing season. This will usually be at the halfway point and towards the end of the growing season.
- 5.3 We will monitor our Complaints system for any issues in relation to the garden assistance service and will remedy any faults identified.
- 5.4 The service will routinely be monitored by the Housing Assistants in our Generic Team to ensure any quality issues are identified and remedied.

## **6. Tenant Participation**

- 6.1 We are a tenant focussed organisation and as such we are committed to involving tenants in all aspects of our work and ensuring that tenants are included, informed and consulted about decisions that have an impact on the way their homes are managed.
- 6.2 As part of this commitment we will involve our tenants in the development of our policies and seek feedback where appropriate. We will ensure that any significant changes to this Policy and other Policies which will affect our tenants will be the subject of consultation.

## **7. Equality and Diversity**

- 7.1 We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all people in our work. In implementing this Policy, we will provide a fair and equal service to all people, irrespective of factors such as gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes.

## **8. Risk Management**

- 8.1 In all the key areas of our business we need to consider any risks which may arise. To this end we have in place a robust Risk Management Policy and from this flows our Risk Register. We have identified our “Top 5” risks which are regularly monitored by our Management Team and Audit Sub-Committee.
- 8.2 Key to the mitigation of the risks that may arise as part of our service delivery is having comprehensive Policies and Procedures in place.
- 8.3 To ensure we continue to manage the associated risks we will periodically review this Policy to ensure compliance with all legislative requirements and regulatory and best practice guidance.

## **9. Complaints Procedure**

- 9.1 We aim to get things right first time and provide a good quality service to our tenants. However, we acknowledge that things can go wrong and that some tenants may be unhappy with the service provided.
- 9.2 We promote our Complaints procedure through our website and periodic articles in our newsletters. In addition, we initially issued all of our tenants with a copy of the new Procedure introduced in October 2012. This information leaflet is also issued to all new tenants as part of the signing up pack.

## **10. Data Protection**

- 10.1 On the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 the legislation governing data protection changed with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 10.2 We hold a variety of Personal Data relating to individuals including tenants, waiting list applicants, factored owners, other service users, employees and Committee Members. Our Privacy Policy sets out the basis on which we can process and share such data with third parties, it also sets out how we will securely store individuals’ data, whether electronically or in paper format. It also provides information on

individuals' rights under GDPR including: to view personal data held about them by us; to request a restriction of processing of their data; the right to be forgotten and a right to object to us processing their data. In terms of the rights to be forgotten and to restrict or object to processing of Personal Data, any such requests will require to be considered on their own merits and legal advice will need to be obtained in some circumstances. We have the responsibility for accepting or refusing such requests and will do so in writing.

- 10.3 Under GDPR we are required to provide all customers whose Personal Data we hold with a Fair Processing Notice (also known as a Privacy Notice). The Notice sets out the Personal Data we process and the basis for doing so.
- 10.4 We will only keep and process Personal Data for the original purpose we gathered it for and we will not keep it for any longer than necessary. Attached to our Privacy Policy is a table of Retention Periods for Personal Data held and processed by us. We recognise that not all Personal Data can be processed and kept for the same period of time, and this will vary depending on the individual circumstances of each person whose Personal Data we hold.
- 10.5 The Privacy Policy sets out what should happen in the event of a Data breach e.g. does the breach require reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office and whether the individual affected should be notified. Timescales are set out for dealing with data breaches.
- 10.6 Full copies of our Privacy Policy are available upon request at our office or from our website [www.rosehillhousing.co.uk](http://www.rosehillhousing.co.uk)

## **11. Policy Review**

- 11.1 This Policy will be reviewed every five years or sooner to ensure it continues to meet Rosehill's objectives and to comply with legislative requirements and regulatory guidance.