



Estate Services Peer Review Photo Book
HouseMark Estate Services Club
April 2016

Introduction

HouseMark is the country's leading provider of support to social housing organisations for performance and service improvement. It works in a variety of ways with most of the country's social housing organisations to improve their focus on customer needs, service and performance efficiency. HouseMark is jointly owned by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the National Housing Federation (NHF), two not-for-profit organisations which reinvest their surpluses into the social housing sector. HouseMark runs Performance Improvement clubs both regionally and for specific service delivery areas.

This Photo Book has been designed by and for members of HouseMark's Estate Services club as part of a Peer Review and benchmarking exercise.

CBH will be adopting the basis of the Photo Book to set the standards needed to manage the grounds maintenance service delivered by Ubico

The contents are to be used as guidance to allow the user to identify areas where grounds maintenance has, or is going to be, implemented, by the use of an A,B,C,D standard

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Maintenance**

THE ASSESSMENT OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE.

GUIDANCE NOTE.

When judging the quality of grass cutting & other grounds maintenance issues, the score shall be attributable to the areas surrounding the block being inspected. The score shall also reflect the area between blocks, large grassed areas and the estate/area generally.

Individual block scores are only likely to change when considering elements such as weed control, shrubs and hedges which may vary between blocks on the same estate/area.

Questions should be asked about what regime the organisation has for the cutting of grass. Is it a particular number of cuts per year or is it to the length of the grass? If possible information should be provided as to when a particular area of grass was cut as this could affect the score given to it.

Some organisations may also have a cut and leave policy. This means that the grass is cut but arising's (cut grass) are not collected. Again the host organisation should say what their specification or service standards are and any organisation which has an advertised and accepted cut and leave strategy or service standard should not be penalised for it, even where it may be considered to look unsightly.

Question should also be asked as to how often weed control is carried out and by whom (caretakers, GM staff or GM contractor etc.). If however there is evidence of unacceptable levels of weeds this must attract a lower score regardless of the frequency of control measures, and should be seen as an area that requires improvement.

Element 1

Grounds Maintenance – the cutting and maintenance of all grassed areas

Grade A

“Very good”

A typical example of such A grade conditions below:



The grassed areas look as though they have been recently cut and are well maintained, with **little evidence of weeds and good quality grass**. The edges of the grassed areas should be cut back to their original line and not spreading over pathways and flower and shrub beds.



Grade **B**

“Good”

A typical example of such **B** grade conditions below:



The grassed areas are in need of some minor attention but are likely to be restored with routine maintenance or maybe more frequent cutting. The grass is reasonably well maintained and has little evidence of weeds. There should be evidence that an attempt has been made to cut the grassed areas back to their original line and they are not spreading over pathways and flower and shrub beds.

The example above indicates where the grass has been cut but arisings have not been collected and taken away. Care should be taken when assessing the quality of grass cutting when arisings have been left on the ground.

The quality of grass cutting under the arisings will determine if this element is worth an A, B, C or D score.



Grade **C**

“Poor”

A typical example of such **C** grade conditions below:

Grassed areas are overgrown; do not appear to have been cut as per the programme or to meet the service standards. The grass is generally in poor condition and needs to be cut back or trimmed. There may also be transgression of grass away from its original line, onto footpaths and into flower and shrub beds.



Grade **D**

“Very poor”

A typical example of such **D** grade conditions below



The grassed areas appear to have not been attended to for some time e.g. growth of grass onto footpaths, and length of grass. The grassed areas are also of an unacceptable quality and although ‘green’ consist mainly of weeds.



Element 2

Grounds Maintenance – weed clearance

Guidance note.

When judging weed control the person carrying out inspections should enquire as to what the weed control cycle is for the host organisation. Most organisation have weed control carried out 2 or 3 times a year but best practice dictates that attention should be paid to control weeds between the carrying out of programmed annual work to ensure no build-up of weeds happens during the growing season or throughout the summer.

Grade **A**

“All Clear of weeds”

A typical example of such **A** grade conditions below



The area is completely free of weeds. Evidence suggests that any weeds that have existed have been killed and all dead weeds removed

Grade **B**

“Generally Clear of weeds”

A typical example of such **B** grade conditions below



The area is generally free of weeds. Any weeds that are evident will be dealt with by seasonal maintenance or a little attention from contractor, GM staff or caretakers.

Grade C

“Evidence of weeds”

A typical example of such C grade conditions below



As well as weeds that are still alive there is evidence of weeds that appear to have been sprayed but have not been removed or not sprayed for a long period. Weeds in this category will appear to have been there for some time and there is little evidence that annual or routine maintenance has taken place.

There may also be evidence of moss that appears to have been there for some while and has not been attended to.



Grade **D**

“Evidence of weeds”

A typical example of such **D** grade conditions below



There is evidence of large amounts of well established, as well as new weeds that appear to have never been attended to. There will be no evidence that any annual or routine maintenance has taken place or that any other weed control has been carried out. There may also be evidence of weeds that have been sprayed a long time ago and have not been removed.



Element 3

Grounds Maintenance – shrub bed and hedge maintenance

Grade **A**

“Very Good”

A typical example of such **A** grade conditions below

Shrub beds and hedges are well maintained, they have been attended to by annual maintenance, have been cut back and are attractive to the eye. There should be no shrubs or hedges that have overgrown footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas.



Grade **B**

“Good”

A typical example of such **B** grade conditions below



Shrub beds and hedges are generally well maintained, but there is evidence of both new and established growth that requires routine attention. Shrubs or hedges should not yet be overgrowing footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas.



Grade **C**

“In need of attention”

A typical example of such **C** grade conditions below



Shrubs or hedges are generally in need of some immediate attention. They are overdeveloped and look like annual maintenance has not been adequate and attention should be paid to them as soon as possible. Shrubs or hedges may have started to overgrow footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas but are not making them impassable or constituting a hazard to residents.

Grade **D**

“Very Poor”

A typical example of such **D** grade conditions below



There is evidence that in a number of areas shrub beds or hedges are overgrowing footpaths, grassed areas and parking or seating areas. Shrubs and hedges look to have not been attended to for a long period of time and have the potential to be a hazard or risk to residents. Shrubs and hedges in this condition would be considered a service failure and would require immediate attention.