

1. Here's what we were looking to find

We wanted to understand whether gardening and tree services are being delivered fairly, consistently, and safely, and whether residents are getting the service they pay for. We also wanted to find out how well contractors are monitored, how clear communication is, and how easy it is for residents to have their say.

2. Here's the evidence we looked at

To build a clear picture, we reviewed:

- Contracts, service level agreements and guidance documents.
- Interviews with senior staff and a gardening contractor (South West).
- Evidence from several scheme visits across Supported Housing, General Needs and Older Persons schemes.
- Photos, case examples and written feedback from residents and staff.
- Examples of good practice and areas needing improvement.

3. Here's the outcome

What we found

- The gardening contract is clear, but standards vary widely between schemes.
- Contractors are not always held accountable when work is late, missed or poor quality.
- Evidence of completed work is not uploaded consistently, making checks harder.
- Residents could be charged for 'historic neglect', which we believe is unfair.
- Communication about visit dates, changes and follow up is inconsistent.
- Some schemes face safety issues linked to poor grounds maintenance.
- Residents want clearer information and more ways to be involved.

4. Our recommendations – in simple terms (topic-specific themes)

1. **Service Level Agreements (SLAs):**

Everyone should follow clear response times and an easy, published escalation route if issues aren't resolved.

2. **Inspections & Local Involvement:**

Schemes should be checked regularly, and residents should have the chance to join inspections.

3. **Tree Management:**

Tree work needs clearer standards, planned inspections, and clear processes for emergencies.

4. **Social Value & Community Activities:**

Contractors should support community gardening, workshops, and resident-led improvements where possible.

5. **Service Charges & Transparency:**

Residents should only pay for work carried out, with clear breakdowns and evidence for every charge.

6. **Contract Standards & Monitoring:**

We want one national standard, better evidence from contractors, and stronger action when work isn't done properly.

7. **Resident Communication:**

Residents should always know when work is due, what is happening, and have simple ways to give feedback.

5. What this means for residents

These changes are designed to make gardening and tree services fairer, safer, better monitored, and more transparent.

They will help ensure residents get the service they are paying for, understand what to expect, and have more opportunities to shape improvements.

T4R will continue to check progress and follow up on how these recommendations are put into action.