



# Annual Report to Tenants

## Wheatley Homes East (formerly West Lothian Housing Partnership)

### Highlights and performance

2021-22

[www.wheatley-group.com](http://www.wheatley-group.com)



## Welcome to the Annual Report to Tenants for 2021-22

You'll find information about our performance this year and what we achieved by working with tenants. The report is based on the key indicators we give the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Given our extensive consultation with customers on our new operating model this year, we agreed with the Regulator to postpone our next satisfaction survey until 2022-23.

The Regulator allows social landlords to use the same indicators for up to three years.

The tenant satisfaction figures reported here – which we've given to the Regulator over the past two years – are from 2019-20. Those figures are highlighted with an asterisk (\*).

West Lothian Housing Partnership joined with Dunedin Canmore Housing in September 2022, following an independent tenant ballot, becoming a single organisation covering Edinburgh, the Lothians and Fife now known as Wheatley Homes East.

The figures here refer to the year ending 31 March, 2022. For that reason, we refer to the former name of WLHP.

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## Welcome, from Wheatley Homes East Chair, Alastair Murray



### **This year saw the full remobilisation of our services after the unparalleled difficulties we faced last year.**

Our customers were still feeling the economic impact of the pandemic, of course, and we continued to support people in financial hardship in our communities in every way we could.

Wheatley Foundation, our charitable trust, supported 260 WLHP customers over the year. We built 62 new homes this year, invested £700k in planned improvements and supported three people from our homes into work and training.

The year saw the launch of our new five-year strategy – Your

Home, Your Community, Your Future – which introduced our new way of working that equips frontline staff to spend even more time supporting tenants in their homes and communities.

The successful introduction of a new 24/7 Customer First Centre (CFC), staffed by specialist, highly-trained advisors, was another pioneering example of how we are providing high-quality, customer-focused services.

It proved to be an historic year for social housing in West Lothian. Tenants from West Lothian Housing Partnership voted to join forces with Dunedin Canmore, our partners in Wheatley, paving the way for the creation of a new organisation – Wheatley

Homes East – as well as additional investment in existing homes and the building of hundreds of new ones.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Mairi Martin, former Chair of WLHP, for her hard work in helping steer the organisation through some difficult times and her constant support for our tenants and communities.

The fallout from the pandemic will be with us for years to come. Rising fuel prices and the emerging cost of living crisis are having a real effect on our customers, but our commitment to supporting the people we work for remains stronger than ever. Here are some of our highlights of the year.

Landlord self-assurance is at the heart of the Scottish Housing Regulator's approach to regulation. An important element of this is our Annual Assurance Statement. We have assessed compliance against the relevant regulatory requirements and the Wheatley Group Board considered evidence at its meeting on 26 October 2022. The Wheatley Group Board has confirmed that all Registered Social Landlords which are part of Wheatley Housing Group Limited – Wheatley Homes Glasgow, Wheatley Homes East, Wheatley Homes South and Loretto Housing Association – comply with all relevant requirements set out in the regulatory framework. The full statement is available to view at [www.wheatley-group.com](http://www.wheatley-group.com) We also comply with the Scottish Social Housing Charter. This Annual Report provides an assessment of our performance against the outcomes and standards.



## Supporting our customers

**We continued to support people in financial hardship brought on by increasing fuel prices, the rise in the cost of living, difficulties caused by Universal Credit, and the continuing impact of the pandemic.**

Our wraparound services, from benefits and fuel advice to help with furnishing their homes, offered vital support to customers and their families.

Almost 30% of WLHP customers are now on Universal Credit, an increase of 2% from last year.

Our Welfare Benefits Advisors supported 75 WLHP customers over the year and helped them claim more than £46k in benefits and tax credits they were entitled to. Across Wheatley, we helped

5606 customers over the year, and helped them claim back more than £10.6m.

Our fuel advisors helped 53 WLHP customers save more than £10.4k on their bills over the year.

We also helped customers across Wheatley access more than £1.6m in external funding to alleviate fuel poverty.

Working with Wheatley Foundation, we:

- created three opportunities for our customers to get into work or training;
- supported 33 new tenants with household budgeting, running a home and settling into their community through My Great Start;

- helped 74 households put food on the table by distributing 109 emergency food vouchers through our EatWell service;
- provided essential household items to nine customers through our Barony Support Fund and Emergency Response Fund;
- gave 13 households up-cycled furniture through our Home Comforts service;
- awarded four young people from our homes a bursary to go to university or college; and
- provided 804 free books to 81 children under five in our homes through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library initiative.



The panel monitored the Group’s performance closely against the key performance indicators and Annual Return on the Charter. Overall, the panel is pleased and would like to congratulate the Group on its performance throughout the year. We are especially pleased with the additional support provided to vulnerable customers to help them through the rise in energy costs, in particular welfare benefit and fuel advice. We are encouraged that the Group will continue to focus on this to support customers.

Throughout the year, we continued to increase our allocation of homes to homeless people. WLHP allocated 36 homes to homeless people over the year.



## Overall satisfaction

Tenants satisfied with the overall service

**2021-22: 95.1% \***

**2020-21: 95.1% \***

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 87.7%**

## Medical adaptations

Average time to complete approved applications for medical adaptations (calendar days)

**2021-22: 22.6 days**

**2020-21: 40.3 days**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 54.3 days**

## Complaints

Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at Stage 1

**2021-22: 4.2 days**

**2020-21: 2.9 days**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 5.8 days**



Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at Stage 2

**2021-22: n/a**

**2020-21: n/a**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 27.4 days**

\*Same figure as past two years (see page 2)



## Improving our services

### **This year saw the full remobilisation of services after the unparalleled difficulties caused by the pandemic.**

At the start of 2021 our housing officers were back on their patches and visiting customers, and our environmental teams were continuing to keep communities clean and safe. A full repairs and maintenance service resumed at the end of April 2021, as did our capital investment programme and non-essential internal investment work.

We also launched our new service model this year, as part of our five-year strategy, which saw us move to hybrid working to help strengthen our presence in communities and take services directly to the people we serve.

Our new CFC features experienced housing professionals offering one-and-done solutions to tenant service requests, freeing up housing officers to spend more time in communities as well as dealing with complex issues face-to-face.

Our first Centres of Excellence – places for staff, customers and stakeholders to meet, collaborate and learn – opened this year, while we also started work on new touchdown points, made up of existing facilities within our communities providing staff with a base between visits to customers' homes.

Customers gave their overwhelming support for our new way of working and new way of engaging in a tenant consultation during the year.



As services continue to remobilise post-pandemic, we are pleased with the progress the Group has made with the introduction of its new operating model and launch of the Customer First Centre. We are also satisfied with the continued good performance around arrears due to the expansion of wraparound services.

# Homes and communities

## Building new homes

WLHP built 42 homes for social rent at Jarvey Street in Bathgate, and 20 social rent homes at Winchburgh this year.

Work is also well underway on 146 new homes at Almondvale in Livingston, 14 at Blackness Road in Linlithgow, and another 63 in East Calder.

## Investing in our homes

We delivered £700k in improvements to our homes and communities over the year.

This included:

- £125k on new 'A' rated energy efficient boilers;
- £286k on window replacements at Buttries View and Woodhead Grove, Armadale;
- £88k on new modern kitchens at Belvedere Place, Bathgate;
- £49k on bathroom upgrades at Auchenhard Place, Stoneyburn;
- £42k on heat and smoke detector upgrades; and
- £24k on major medical adaptations.



## Improving our neighbourhoods

We continued our work to create clean and safe neighbourhoods people are proud to live in. Our environmental teams resumed full service in May 2021 and over the year, they removed 10 tonnes of bulk waste from WLHP and Dunedin Canmore communities every week.

We continued our partnership with environmental charity Keep Scotland Beautiful which sees our communities inspected and assessed to help improve standards. In 2021-22, every

WLHP neighbourhood assessed received a five-star rating, the highest possible score.

Our environmental campaign at the end of 2021-22 helped us engage with partners and customers to improve WLHP communities.

Wheatley's Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) – a specialist team of seconded police and our own frontline staff – continued to work with our communities to tackle anti-social

behaviour and crime.

Wheatley Group was named Policing Partner of the Year at the 2022 Chief Constable Bravery and Excellence Awards.

We helped protect customers from the risk of fire by carrying out six home fire safety visits in WLHP homes and communities. This year saw a 30% reduction in accidental fires in Wheatley homes.

## Lettable homes

The number and type of WLHP stock as of 31 March 2022

### Self contained stock

Stock by apartment size and average rent	Total units	Number of lettable units	Average weekly rent
1 apt	–	–	–
2 apt	195	194	£87.87
3 apt	417	417	£94.44
4 apt	145	145	£100.54
5 apt+	7	7	£108.65
Total self-contained:	764	763	£94.06

(Average rents based on lettable stock only)



The panel met with senior officers throughout the year, including the Performance Frameworks Manager, to discuss the Group's performance framework, and the Group Protection and Strategic Partnership Lead, to scrutinise the Group's anti-social behaviour framework. The panel will continue to work with the Group to monitor and scrutinise performance closely.



# Your repairs service



**We resumed a full repairs and maintenance service at the end of April 2021 and worked through the backlog of repairs built up during the previous year of restricted services. Over the year, we completed 3357 reactive repairs.**

We saw an increase in the volume of repairs this year, in common with the rest of the housing sector. This higher demand, as well as the length of time it took to work through the backlog from last year and a nationwide shortage of materials, had an impact on our

average time to complete non-emergency repairs, which stood at 6.5 days, up from 4 days last year.

We completed 93.4% of repairs right first time, down from 97.2% last year, and satisfaction with repairs or maintenance carried out in the previous 12 months increased from 84.2% to 90.3%. All our homes also have a valid gas certificate.

We'll do all we can to improve performance next year, and our new CFC should help with this.

## Non-emergency repairs

Average time to complete non-emergency repairs

**2021-22: 6.5 days**

**2020-21: 4 days**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 8.9 days**

## Repairs and maintenance

Satisfaction with repairs or maintenance in last 12 months

**2021-22: 90.3%**

**2020-21: 84.2%**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 88%**

## Gas safety

Number of times the statutory obligation to complete a gas safety check within 12 months of a gas appliance being fitted or its last check was not met

**2021-22: 0**

**2020-21<sup>†</sup>: 8**

## Reactive repairs

Reactive repairs completed right first time

**2021-22: 93.4%**

**2020-21: 97.2%**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 88.3%**

<sup>†</sup>In 2020-21, Scottish Government restrictions, and the fact many customers were shielding, meant there were 8 times we weren't able to complete all gas safety checks within 12 months. But we prioritised safety certificates which had expired in the early part of 2020-21, and all checks were successfully carried out by September 2020.

# Rent and value for money

**We know how difficult circumstances are for many of our tenants and we know it's more important than ever that tenants feel their homes and services are good value for money.**

The economic fallout from the pandemic, rising fuel bills, the wider cost of living crisis and moving to Universal Credit caused unprecedented challenges for many people, and we worked hard to help them access support available and to pay their rent

and other household bills.

Our online discounts scheme, MySavings, continues to help customers make their money go further and cut the cost of their weekly shop. In 2021-22, 5900 customers across Wheatley were registered for MySavings, an increase of 1000 from the previous year.

Strong customer relationships and the high levels of support we provide to customers in financial hardship, limited the impact

on rent arrears. Our gross rent arrears stood at 2.9% at the end of the year, up from 2.6% the previous year. Rent collection decreased slightly from 97.7% to 97.1%. The average days to re-let properties was 5.9 days this year, down from 19.8 days last year.

We will continue to do all we can to help tenants overcome the financial difficulties they face and ensure they feel their homes and services are good value for money.

## Value for money

Percentage of tenants who feel their rent is good value for money

**2021-22: 89.1% \***

**2020-21: 89.1% \***

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 82.5%**

## Rent collected

Rent collected as a percentage of total rent due

**2021-22: 97.1%**

**2020-21: 97.7%**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 99.3%**

## Rent arrears

Gross rent arrears

**2021-22: 2.9%**

**2020-21: 2.6%**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 6.3%**

## Rent lost

Rent lost through properties being empty

**2021-22: 0.2%**

**2020-21: 0.3%**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 1.4%**

## Re-let properties

Average length of time taken to re-let properties

**2021-22: 5.9 days**

**2020-21: 19.8 days**

**Scottish Average  
2021-22: 51.6 days**

\*Same figure as past two years (see page 2)



## Engaging with customers

**Engaging more effectively with our communities and giving tenants real influence over services and decision-making has always been important to us.**

We continued to help customers get online this year and encouraged them to engage with us through our digital channels and online self-service accounts. By the end of the financial year, almost 66% of WLHP customers had registered for an online account with us.

Around 1460 people used the

WLHP website every month, with more than 17,500 active users over the year. The number of followers on our social media channels this year was 925, an increase of 63 from the year before.

This year, we consulted with customers on plans for a new operating model and a new way of engaging, with 89% of customers who took part supporting the proposals.

This year saw us recruit people across West Lothian as ‘customer

voices’ to influence investment decisions, with customers also taking part in neighbourhood walkabouts to identify local priorities.

The walkabouts, and other customer engagement activities, identified investment projects across several communities including the redecoration of communal stairs, erecting washing poles in drying areas, replacing fencing and upgrading flower beds.



We continue to acknowledge the importance of tenant engagement and the opportunity for customers to give their views and have more say over what happens in their communities. We are encouraged with the progress made in implementing the Group’s engagement framework, Stronger Voices, Stronger Communities. The Panel feels this focuses on the right areas of giving customers more choice, flexibility and influence. We are pleased to see improvements in customer engagement through the recruitment of Customer Voices, through walkabouts and local community projects. We are also satisfied with the increase in focus groups to allow customers to be involved in co-creating policies and, for example, the Group’s approach to equality data collection. The Panel looks forward to engagement developing and diversifying further.

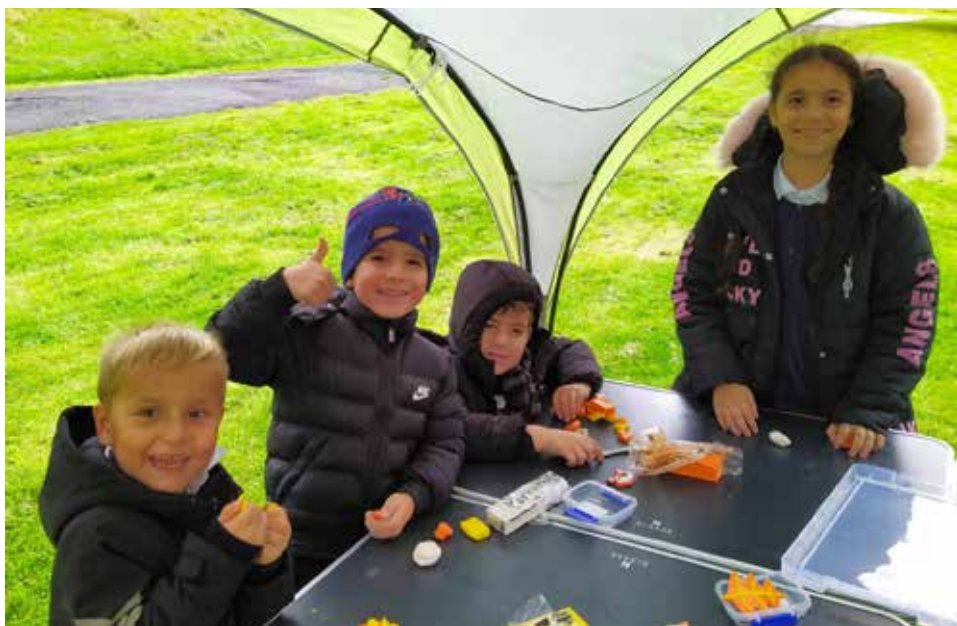
## Decision making

Percentage of tenants who were happy with opportunities to participate

2021-22: 92.9% \*

2020-21: 92.9% \*

Scottish Average  
2021-22: 86.8%



## Keeping you informed

Tenants satisfied with their landlord keeping them informed about their services and decisions

2021-22: 91.9% \*

2020-21: 91.9% \*

Scottish Average  
2021-22: 91.1%



\*Same figure as past two years (see page 2)

**Are you happy with how information is presented in this report? We can use your feedback to help improve things for other people. Email us at [talk@wheatleyhomes-east.com](mailto:talk@wheatleyhomes-east.com) or phone us on 01506 416 438.**

