

Annual Report to Tenants

West Lothian Housing Partnership
Highlights and performance
2019/20



Welcome to the Annual Report to Tenants for 2019/20. You'll find information about our performance over the year and what we achieved by working with our tenants and communities.

The report is based on the key indicators we give the Scottish Housing Regulator.



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Welcome
from West Lothian Housing Partnership Chair
John M Hill



The unprecedented events in March 2020 challenged West Lothian Housing Partnership – our communities, tenants and staff – as never before.

But while the coronavirus crisis overshadowed the year, and will continue to do so for a long time to come, WLHP responded in the interests of its customers and staff.

The crisis necessitated a temporary halt to many of our activities, including our investment and new build programmes. However, we built a further 83 homes over the financial year, invested £290,000 in planned improvements to existing homes and supported three people from our homes into work or training.

The aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak will continue to test us as an organisation in the months and years ahead. But our strong position as part of Wheatley Group, together with our Think Yes culture and our track record in adapting to even the most difficult of circumstances, mean we can face the future confident in our ability to respond to whatever challenges it brings.

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 28 October 2020. The Wheatley Group Board has confirmed that all Registered Social Landlords which are part of Wheatley Housing Group Limited – GHA, Dunedin Canmore Housing, Cube Housing Association, Loretto Housing Association, West Lothian Housing Partnership, Barony Housing Association and Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership – comply with all relevant requirements set out in the regulatory framework. The full statement is available to view at 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

This year has been a difficult and challenging time for everyone.

At WLHP, we have been determined to support our tenants and communities in every way we can, particularly through the pandemic.

As well as the difficulties posed by the coronavirus crisis, more than a fifth of Wheatley customers are now on Universal Credit (UC), an increase of almost 10% from last year.

WLHP has 25% of customers on UC.

We continued to support our customers through the challenges they faced, particularly around the five-week delay in getting their first payment.

This year we brought our money advice support staff together into a new dedicated UC team to provide even more targeted support, while we also seconded a staff member from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to help improve the delivery of the benefit.

Our advisors helped customers in WLHP and the other housing associations in Wheatley claim over £11m in benefits they were entitled to last year, and over the next twelve months we will continue to do all we can to support customers cope with the difficulties posed by UC.



The Scrutiny Panel met with senior managers and staff to discuss how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted services and was pleased to see additional support, such as EatWell food packages, increased money and benefits advice, technology for children and other support for the homeless being given to vulnerable tenants and families. The Panel fully supports these additional measures being implemented from day one of the pandemic. It was reassuring to know that no one was left behind.

Working with Wheatley Foundation and Wheatley 360, we:

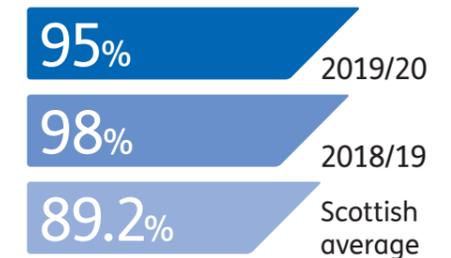
- ▶ created four opportunities for people from our homes to get into work or training, with three of our customers benefiting;
- ▶ supported seven new tenants with household budgeting, running a home and settling into their community through My Great Start;
- ▶ awarded one young person from our homes a bursary to go to university or college; and;
- ▶ provided free books every month to 40 children under five in our homes through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library initiative.

When the coronavirus crisis struck in March, we massively expanded the help we provide to our vulnerable customers. Our emergency food service EatWell, for example, has delivered over 28,000 lifeline food packages to people in need across Wheatley communities since the start of the crisis.

We know the pandemic and the challenges it has brought will be with us for some time. We remain committed to supporting our tenants and communities, now and through the uncertainties of the future.

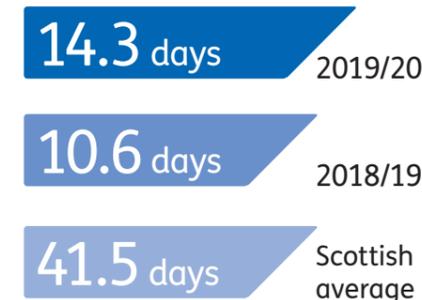
Overall satisfaction

Tenants satisfied with the overall service



Medical adaptations

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



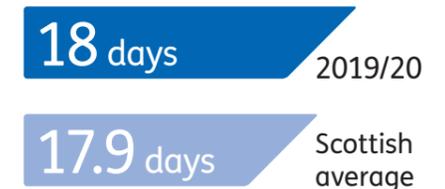
Complaints - Stage 1

Average time for full response to complaints (working days)



Complaints - Stage 2

Average time for full response to complaints (working days)



Improving our services

Despite the economic challenges our communities continue to face, we can once again report a strong and improving performance in 2019/20 in many of the areas we measure.

95%
Overall satisfaction with WLHP



The percentage of tenants who felt the rent for their home represented good value for money was 89%, up from 84% the year before, while tenants' satisfaction with WLHP's contribution to the management of their neighbourhood stood at 91%.

Overall customer satisfaction at WLHP remained high at 95%, down from 98% the year before.

The percentage of tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making at WLHP was at 93%.

89%
Tenants who feel their home represents good value for money



Wheatley Group Scrutiny Panel
The Panel is pleased to see continued strong performance in overall customer satisfaction. Over the coming year we will monitor performance across all other aspects of customer satisfaction, including satisfaction with opportunities to participate and with rent as value for money.

Homes and communities

Building new homes

Despite all the challenges we faced this year, WLHP built 83 new affordable homes over the year, all of them for social rent.

Our completed new homes were 77 at Barracks View, Whitburn, and six at Tulloch Lane, Livingston.

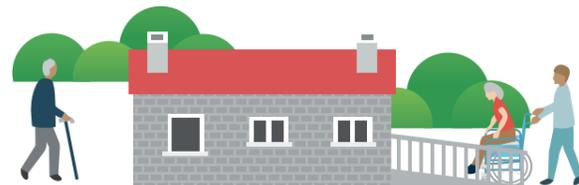
We also progressed work on 146 new homes at Almondvale in Livingston, 42 homes at Jarvey Street in Bathgate, and the final eight homes in Barracks View.

Investing in our homes

In 2019/20, we delivered £290,000 of planned improvements in our homes and communities.

This included £70,000 on new high-efficiency boilers for 20 homes and £56,000 on new smoke detectors for 144 homes.

83
new homes built
in 2019/20



Improving our neighbourhoods

Creating clean, green and safe neighbourhoods where people are proud to live remained one of our priorities.

Wheatley's Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) – made up of seconded police and fire officers and our own staff – continued to work with WLHP communities to tackle anti-social behaviour, crime and fire safety.

Our refreshed Stay Safe campaign saw more than 3000 home fire safety visits carried out across Wheatley communities in 2019/20, with the total number of accidental fires in Wheatley homes falling by 10%.

We resolved 100% of all anti-social cases reported to us in the past year.

Our sector-leading partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful continues to see staff and customers assess the environment in our neighbourhoods. We are delighted that WLHP's neighbourhoods have achieved a five-star rating.

Tenants' satisfaction with WLHP's contribution to the management of their neighbourhood was at 91%.

91%
Tenants satisfied with WLHP's contribution to the management of their neighbourhood



We know local services and improvements are very important to tenants and we welcome the opportunity for tenants to improve their neighbourhoods. We will continue to review customer satisfaction with the management of neighbourhoods over the coming year.

Self-contained Stock								
Stock by type, apartment size and rent	House	High rise	Tenement	4 in a block	Other flat/maisonette	Total wholly owned stock	Number of lettable units	Average weekly rent
1 Apt						0	0	
2 Apt	18		27	36		81	81	£80.66
3 Apt	120		92	88		300	300	£88.09
4 Apt	131					131	131	£94.98
5 Apt +	7					7	7	£103.34
Total Self-contained	276	0	119	124	0	519	519	£88.88

Your repairs service

When the pandemic struck in March, we were only able to provide a restricted repairs service, with the safety of our tenants and staff always our top priority.

However, before then, we continued with our mission to launch improvements to the service from September 2019.

These included:

- ▶ setting up a specialist repairs team within our customer contact centre, with full training delivered to 34 specialist call-handlers; and
- ▶ introducing a 'next day' appointments service.



94%
Satisfaction with the repairs service



Tenant satisfaction with the repairs service stood at 94%, down from 98% the year before. Emergency repairs took an average of 1.9 hours, down from 2.5 the previous year. Non-emergencies were completed in 4.9 working days, the same as last year.

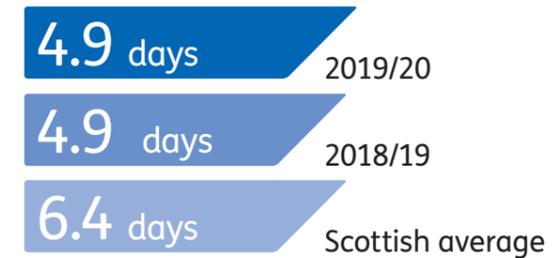
A total of 96.4% of repairs were completed right first time, up slightly from last year's figure of 95.5%.

We are continuing – under the current pandemic restrictions – to provide as wide a range of services as possible.

We are working hard to reintroduce a full repairs service as quickly as we can and when it is safe to do so.

Non-emergency repairs

Average time to complete non-emergency repairs

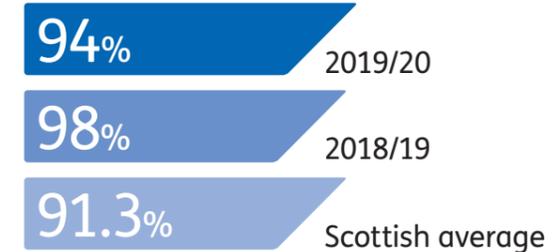


Gas safety

Like all social landlords, West Lothian Housing Partnership has a statutory obligation to carry out gas safety checks in tenants' homes within 12 months of a gas appliance being fitted or its last check. We completed all the required gas safety checks for the year 2019/20 on time.

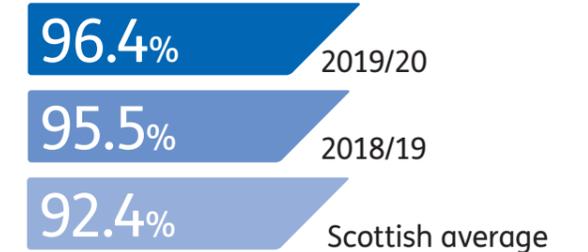
Repairs and maintenance

Satisfaction with repairs or maintenance in last 12 months



Reactive repairs

Reactive repairs completed right first time

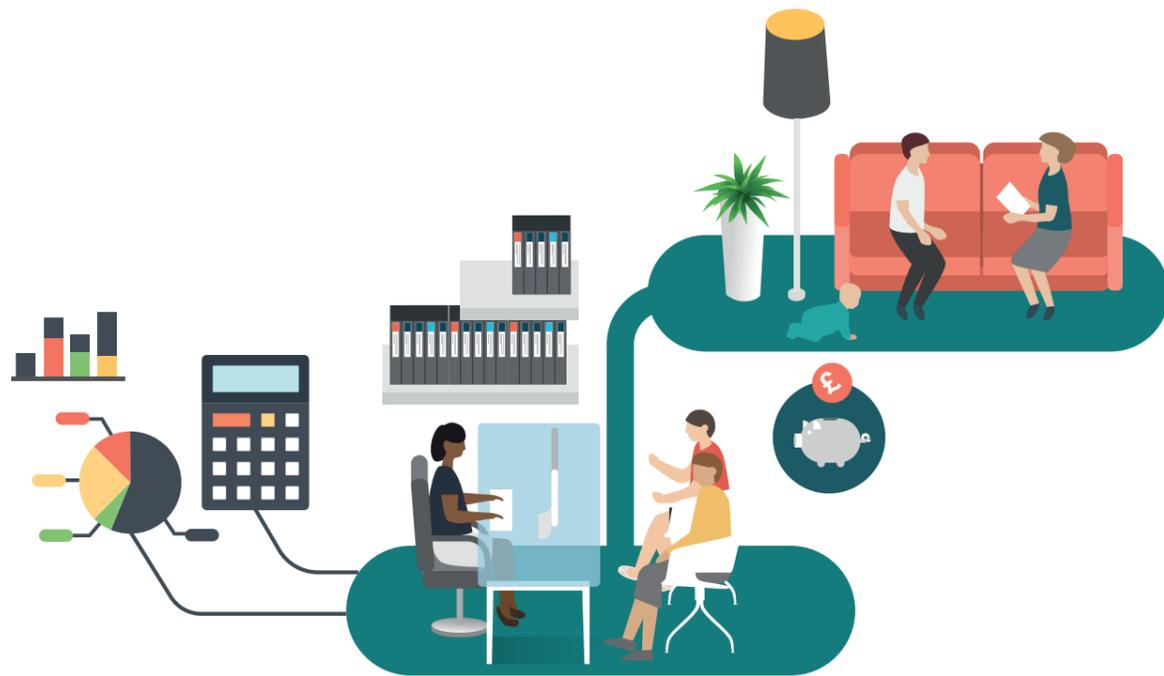


The Panel concluded their review of the repairs service from the customer point of view, including repairs completed right first time and quality of repair. Our aim was to identify what works well and identify areas for refinement that are now being actioned. We will continue to review customer satisfaction with other aspects of the service over the next twelve months.

Rent and value for money

We understand many people will continue to face challenges as we live with the impacts of coronavirus.

That's why it's more important than ever that tenants feel their homes and services are good value for money.



In 2019/20, the percentage of tenants who felt the rent for their home represented good value for money was 89%, up from 84% the year before.

Moving on to Universal Credit caused unprecedented challenges for many of our customers and we worked hard to help them access support available and to pay their rent and other household bills.

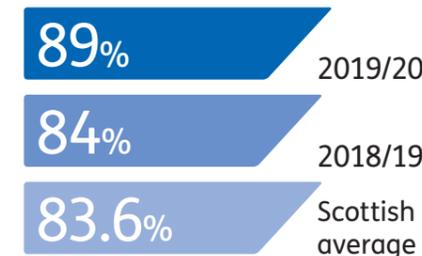
Our online discounts scheme, MySavings, continues to help customers make their money go further and cut the cost of their weekly shop.

Our gross rent arrears increased slightly to 2.3% from 1.7% the previous year, while rent collection – at 99% – (last year 99.8%) remained steady despite the economic difficulties facing our communities.

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

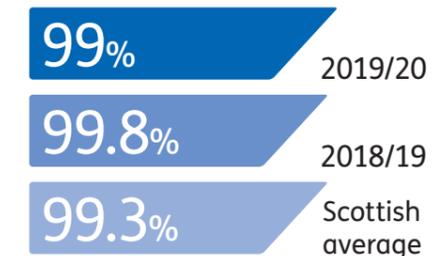
Value for money

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



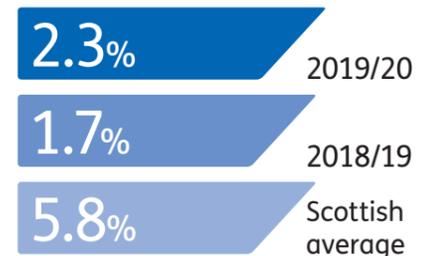
Rent collected

Rent collected as a percentage of total rent due



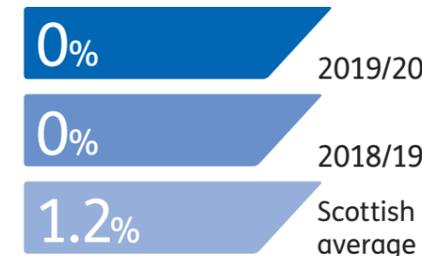
Rent arrears

Gross rent arrears



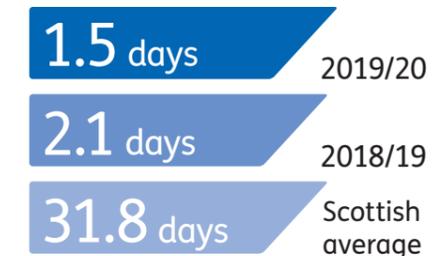
Rent lost

Rent lost through properties being empty



Re-let properties

Average length of time taken to re-let properties



Engaging with customers

In what has been a difficult year for everyone, engaging more effectively with our communities became more important than ever.

At WLHP, we have been determined to engage with and support our communities in every way we can.



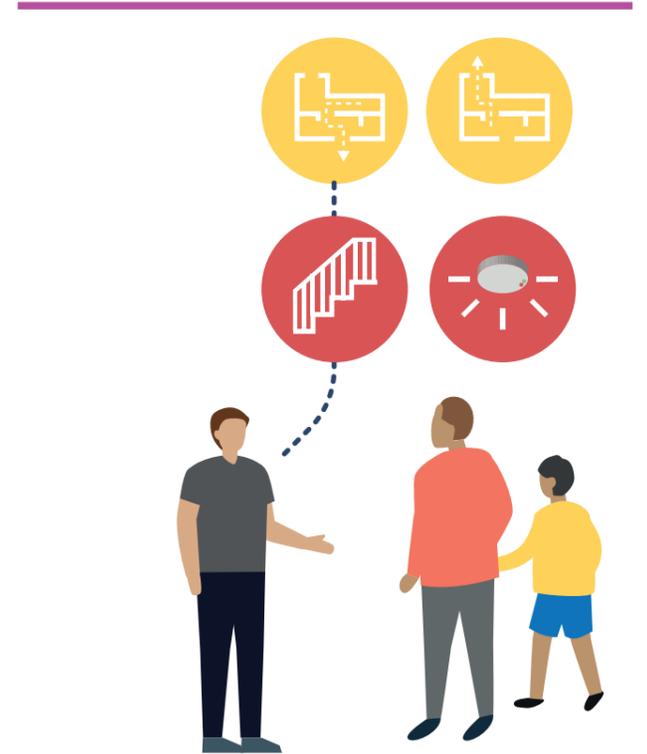
Are you happy with how information is presented in this report? We can use your feedback to help improve things for other people. Email us at talk@wlhp.org or phone us on 01506 416 438.

We engaged with more people online than ever before. Almost 800 people followed our WLHP Facebook page – an increase of more than 50 people on last year. Our housing officers introduced new ways of talking with customers online, for example through Whatsapp and Zoom.

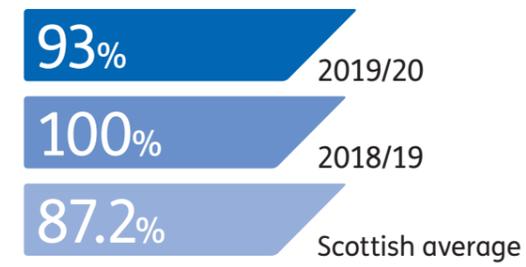
We continued to support our customers to get online and to encourage them to engage with us through our digital channels and online self-service accounts. The past year saw a 34% increase in the number of WLHP customers registered for our online services, and a 37% increase in the number of transactions online.

The percentage of tenants who felt WLHP was good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions was at 92%, down from 100%, while the percentage of tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making stood at 93%, down from 100%.

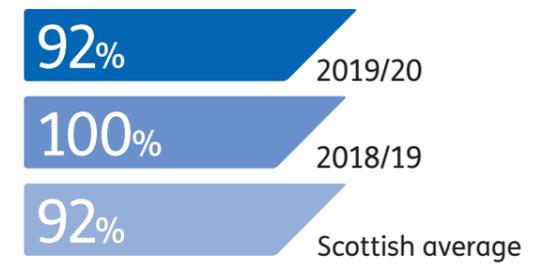
We will continue to do all we can to engage with tenants as much as possible and to support our communities 24/7.



Decision making
Percentage of tenants who were happy with opportunities to participate



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



Wheatley Group, Wheatley House,
25 Cochrane Street, Glasgow, G1 1HL
wheatley-group.com

