

West Lothian Housing Partnership

Annual Highlights 2016–17



Chair's welcome

John Hill

Chair of West Lothian Housing Partnership

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Chair of West Lothian
Housing Partnership

The year 2016-17 saw significant progress at West Lothian Housing Partnership as we pushed forward with our mission to create better homes and better lives for our tenants.

Our ambitions to play our part in increasing the supply of affordable housing saw our plans for 97 new homes in Bathgate and Winchburgh take shape.

We also invested £778,000 in our existing homes as part of our £1.3m plans to upgrade our homes over five years. The work included replacing kitchens, redecorating and new floor coverings and showers.

This record investment in our communities was achieved against a backdrop of strong business performance with improvements across a range of key measures.

Most notably our overall customer satisfaction rose from 87.2% to 93.5% while satisfaction with repairs increased from 88.4% to 93.5%.

We worked harder than ever before at listening, and responding, to what our customers want. For example we held a series of ‘Meet and Greet’ events in our local communities, using the feedback gained to shape a number of improvements to our services. We are delighted that 94% of tenants at WLHP are now satisfied with the opportunities to participate in our decision-making, up from 82.8% last year.

Our work, as always, in 2016-17 went beyond housing and housing services. Some of our tenants still struggle financially and supporting them remains a major focus at WLHP.

Our specialist advisors helped our customers save money on their energy bills, and claim back money in welfare payments which they were entitled to. Our Tenancy Support Service, delivered by Loretto Housing to all social landlords in Wheatley, gave tailored support to our most vulnerable tenants who were having particular difficulties keeping their tenancy.

This year, together with our partners in Wheatley, we also gave people living in our homes more opportunities to access apprenticeships and introduced Changing Lives traineeships for people facing real barriers to employment.

We continued to realise the benefits of working together with our partner organisations as part of Wheatley Group. Our parent company, Wheatley, became joint owners, with Glasgow City Council, of City Building (Glasgow). This



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has provided the Group with an opportunity to review and redesign our repairs service model with the aim of achieving outstanding customer service for our tenants every time. While the jointly-owned City Building (Glasgow) will deliver repairs and investment work in the west of Scotland, the in-house property team at Dunedin Canmore will be responsible for repairs services in the east, including at West Lothian Housing Partnership. All tenants, no matter where they live, can expect to see local, responsive services, delivering the same outstanding standards.

Wheatley also established the Wheatley Foundation, a new charitable trust which supports programmes which can make a difference to disadvantaged communities.

It is chaired by Sir Harry Burns, former Chief Medical Officer of Scotland. It is supporting 15 different programmes across our communities, all of them designed to offer new opportunities to our customers, and their families. So far 7466 people have benefited from the Wheatley Foundation's projects which include apprenticeships, bursaries, cultural and sporting activities and a new money advice service for vulnerable people.

So we can look back on 2016-17 with pride. But, as always, we do so in the full knowledge that there is still much more to do in the months and years ahead if we're to achieve our vision of better homes, better lives.

Turn over for the annual highlights 2016-17

Our highlights

Our homes

We continued our work to modernise and maintain our homes, investing £778,000 as part of our £1.3m plans over five years. The work for the year included new kitchens and showers. The improvements were driven by customer feedback last summer.

Our plans to build more affordable homes in our communities made progress with plans for 97 new affordable homes in Bathgate and Winchburgh taking shape.

We had 381 homes at the end of the financial year 2016-17 with 100% of them meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Environmental services

Our communities benefited from a share of £20million invested by Wheatley Group in environmental services. This included restructuring the teams and recruiting almost 200 environmental staff, including apprentices and trainees, to work in Wheatley's neighbourhoods.

Involving tenants

We held engagement events in all seven of our communities over the summer as part of our commitment to engage with customers and better understand their views and expectations.

The pop-up events were a great way for tenants to find out about services, meet their neighbours and to shape what we do. For example, tenants' views have influenced decisions over the investment work we are carrying out in our homes.



A new repairs service

Our ambition to create a modern, local and more efficient repairs and maintenance service took a major step forward over 2016-17.

Dunedin Canmore's in-house property team took responsibility for delivering repair services to customers in the east of Scotland, including for West Lothian Housing Partnership.

£20m

invested in strengthening Wheatley's environmental services.

Meanwhile Wheatley became 50/50 joint owner, with Glasgow City Council, of City Building (Glasgow) on 1 April, 2017. The jointly-owned company is delivering repairs and investment services for our sister organisations in the west of Scotland. This has given all the partners in Wheatley an opportunity to work together to reshape our repairs service, designing a service which will deliver consistent excellence for customers no matter where they live. Work on this, which has included consulting with tenants, is under way.

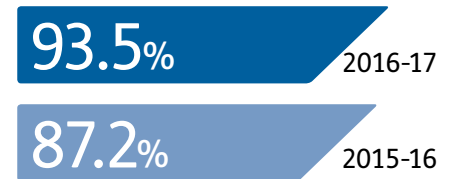
Improving performance

We continued to improve our performance with 18 out of 26 measures which we report to the Scottish Housing Regulator – or 69% – in the top quartile when benchmarked with other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This is significant progress on last year when 54% of our reported performance measures were in the top quartile.

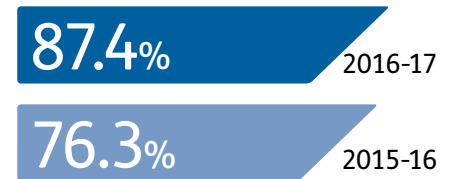


Performance highlights for the year included:

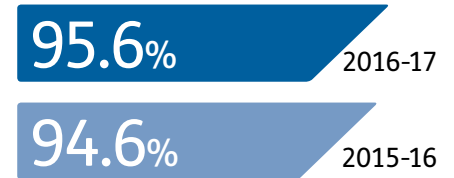
Customer satisfaction



Tenants who feel their rent represents good value



Repairs completed right first time



New tenants satisfied with the quality of their home when they moved in



New tenants satisfied with the quality of their home



Awards and accreditations

WLHP gained a coveted 'Committed to Excellence' award after rigorous assessment by Quality Scotland against the European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model which measures business performance.

WLHP also played a part in Wheatley, our parent company:

- ▶ regaining Customer Service Excellence accreditation with 19 'compliance plus' marks, a record number and up from 16 the previous year;
- ▶ being ranked no 47 in the Sunday Times list of best not-for-profit organisations to work for;
- ▶ making it into 24 Housing magazine's top 10 social landlords in the UK.

Rent campaign

Our annual rent campaign resulted in our best ever arrears performance over the festive period.

The campaign, which urged customers to Put Rent First, invited people who were facing difficulties to get in touch and access the wide range of help and support we have available. The campaign materials, which included posters, newsletter articles and regular content on social media and our website, also made clear to customers what their rent pays for.

It resulted in over 40 of our customers being taken out of housing debt and being more in control of their finances thanks



to support from our wraparound services.

Our new website

We launched our new website in April as part of our drive to encourage and support our customers to go online. The website, which was designed in consultation with tenants, is mobile friendly, easy to navigate and features engaging content.

Our target is to see 30% of all customer transactions carried out online and it is hoped the new website will play a part in encouraging people to engage and transact with us online.

Over 2016-17, a total of 10 new tenants signed up for online self-services, bringing the total number

£100k

paid by customers through our online channels.

619

opportunities created for people in Wheatley communities.

of registered users at WLHP to 77. Over £100,000 was paid by customers through the online channel over the 12-month period.

Jobs and training opportunities

Our new charitable trust, Wheatley Foundation, funds a range of employability initiatives targeted at tenants, owners and their families. These include apprenticeships as well as traineeships and Wheatley Pledge, a scheme which incentivises our suppliers to do even more for our communities.

The scale of our new-build and investment programmes also means Wheatley can create or support opportunities for people from our communities to access jobs and training each year.

In total we created 619 opportunities for people in Wheatley communities. One person from WLHP accessed a Modern Apprenticeship during the year and another secured a Changing Lives traineeship. This is a new scheme aimed at supporting people who need extra help to get into work or training. The traineeships last for a year and involve working and learning skills alongside our environmental teams.

Helping tenants save money

We continue to support our tenants in a wide range of ways.

For example we helped tenants to save more than £7977 collectively on their fuel bills over the year.



Our fuel advisor provides free expert advice to tenants on cutting their energy bills and keeping their homes warm.

The advisor can help tenants access the cheapest tariffs, arrange low-cost payment arrangements and, depending on their circumstances, help them write-off long-term debt.

Our My Great Start service which helps new tenants get off to a good start with their tenancy supported 37 WLHP customers to develop budgeting skills and manage their money.

Support for the most vulnerable

Our Tenancy Support Service, delivered by Loretto Housing Association for vulnerable tenants across the Group, was launched in 2015 with the aim of helping people maintain their tenancy and get more out of life.

In 2016-17, a total of 1998 tenants from across all partners in Wheatley received tailored support for up to eight weeks. Of these, nine were WLHP tenants. 100% of tenants who returned a questionnaire said they were satisfied with the service they received.



West Lothian Housing Partnership is registered as a company limited by guarantee, registered number SC188968. Scottish Charity No. SC031668. Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator, number 318. VAT registration no. 135 5317 26. Registered office: Wheatley House, 25 Cochrane Street, Glasgow, G1 1HL.

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