



## How the Foundation stepped up as never before

By Sir Harry Burns  
Chair, Wheatley Foundation



IN times of crisis, we learn so much about ourselves and our organisation.

When the pandemic struck in March this year, the Wheatley Foundation, the charitable trust within Wheatley Group, stepped up as never before to help communities in their time of greatest need.

Many of Wheatley Group's customers had their incomes reduced or found themselves unemployed and claiming benefits. Many struggled to feed their families or to buy essential items for the home. Others, separated from friends and family, suffered the effects of isolation.

The Foundation was at the forefront of efforts across the Group to help those people who were most affected by the pandemic.

The scale of what staff achieved in these unprecedented times is truly remarkable.

**EatWell**, our lifeline emergency food service, has delivered no fewer than 28,000 food parcels to customers struggling to put food on the table. Those individuals and families would simply have gone hungry without our support.

Our **Emergency Response Fund** has also provided essential lifeline items to people in financial hardship who were ill or self-isolating.

That support has included help with mobile phone and fuel top-ups, white goods such as cookers, activity packs for children, baby milk, nappies, pet food and more.

I'd like to thank the Scottish Government for their financial support of **EatWell**. Their donation of £350,000 not only helped us continue the lifeline service, but was a recognition of Wheatley Group as a trusted partner able to play a pivotal role in efforts to support vulnerable people across the country. The assistance of many other Wheatley partners and suppliers has also been invaluable.

While immediate, emergency relief has been our priority since the start of the pandemic, we have also continued our work to tackle social exclusion, take people out of poverty and build a more equal society.

Our **My Great Start** service has this year helped hundreds of vulnerable customers become more financially secure, while our bursary scheme has also helped almost 80 people gain qualifications and increase their skills.

The effects of the pandemic have been devastating for people, for communities and for our economy, and they may be with us for some time to come.

Here at the Wheatley Foundation, we will continue to work with the wider Wheatley Group, and our many partners, to do everything we can to help support those who experience hardship or isolation or find themselves in crisis.



## EatWell: emergency lifeline for thousands

WHEN the pandemic struck in March, our EatWell service mobilised like never before.

Before Covid, we had five staff and two vans delivering 120 food parcels a week to customers in Glasgow.

At the height of lockdown, we had 53 staff in a fleet of 23 vans delivering almost 2000 emergency food parcels to customers across Scotland every week, peaking at 2600 deliveries in one week.

Between March and October, EatWell delivered more than 28,000 food parcels to individuals and families in our communities struggling to put food on the table.

That emergency support was a real lifeline to our most vulnerable customers.

Army veteran Joe Stevenson, 92, from Glasgow, said: "I can't leave the house, so the food parcels are a big help to me. I really appreciate it. It shows

***'I'm 90 and the food parcels were very, very helpful during this time'***

you are really looking out for us."

Another tenant, from Edinburgh, was struggling to feed his family and received baby milk through EatWell. He said: "You have no idea what this means to me."

The Scottish Government also recognised the value and importance of EatWell by allocating us £350,000 to continue the service over the summer.

Frontline staff praised the simplicity of the Foundation's referral system, which meant support was delivered quickly to those who needed it.

## Helping people get off to the best start

MY Great Start – delivered in partnership with local third-sector organisations, supported by the Foundation – provides the support new tenants need to make a go of their homes.

The service supported people this year with budgeting advice, help to claim benefits and fuel advice.

Between March and October, the Foundation helped more than 700 vulnerable customers claim almost £450,000 to which they were entitled. Almost half of those customers got help with Universal Credit claims.

One GHA tenant, who got help with backdated benefit payments, said: "It has been a very stressful time and without the support I would have struggled to cope. I'm very thankful."

***'Getting a new cooker makes things much easier for me'***

***'Thank you very much to everyone at the Wheatley Foundation'***



## 'I didn't even have to ask – the help was there straight away'

THE Emergency Response Fund helped more than 5600 households and families with essential items between March and October.

The Fund has supported people with fuel and mobile phone top-ups, furniture and white goods such as cookers, as well as pet food and gardening equipment.

It has helped children stave off the effects of isolation with activity packs and colouring-in books, helped struggling parents buy baby milk and nappies too.

Pupils at Bankhead Primary School in Glasgow received 24 tablet computers to help them with their schoolwork.



Even small gestures such as chocolates and a birthday card – purchased through the fund – meant so much to customers because they knew someone was looking out for them.

Tenant Irene Brown, from Hyvot Park, Edinburgh, received a new cooker through the fund. She said: "It's brilliant. This has made life easier for me. I'm really grateful for the help."

Natasha Schofield, from Glasgow, got help with her fuel bills, as well as an art set for her daughter. She said: "It was brilliant. I didn't even have to ask – the help was there straight away."

As with EatWell, frontline staff appreciated the speed of the Foundation's response, which meant requests were approved and items delivered quickly.

Staff across the Group also spoke of their pride in being part of an organisation that helps its customers in so many ways.



**'Wheatley has done so much to help during lockdown'**

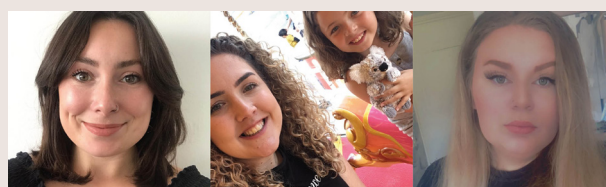
## 'Bursary has given me peace of mind'

THE Foundation awarded 80 bursaries this year to help people in our communities fulfil their dreams of studying at college and university - an increase of 30 as a direct result of Covid.

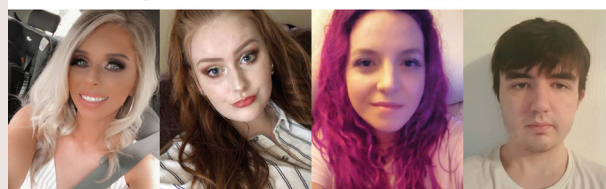
The bursaries, which are worth up to £1500 for full-time students and £750 for part-time studies, cover HNC, HND, Undergraduate Degree

and Postgraduate courses. Erin Kennedy, 28, from Annan, studying to be a primary school teacher, said: "The bursary was like magic. It's made me more financially comfortable and given me peace of mind."

Since 2017, the Foundation has awarded 230 bursaries.



**Bursary 2020**



**'It's great for my children to see me studying full-time'**

## Ministers praise ‘incredible response’ from ‘trusted partner’

IT'S not just customers who have appreciated the work of the Foundation - the Scottish Government has expressed its gratitude too.

A £350,000 tranche of Scottish Government funding for our expanded EatWell emergency food delivery service was announced by the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon in her daily coronavirus briefing on national television in April.

The First Minister said: “This morning we have announced £350,000 for the Wheatley Group to provide 8500 food deliveries across 17 different local authority areas. Each delivery will supply food for people in need that will do them for seven days.”

The funding represented half of the £700,000 being distributed from the Scottish Food Fund to 19 projects across the country back in April.

That official recognition of the impact our vital service was having was confirmed in an email to us Paul Tyrer, Deputy Director for Social Justice and Regeneration, at Scottish Government.

He said: “Ministers see Wheatley as a trusted partner of government with the scope and scale to deliver a significant service and help local councils with their food offer. Thanks again for all the great work you’re doing to support people and communities across Scotland.”

In August, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities, Aileen Campbell MSP, met with Foundation staff to learn more about how we were supporting vulnerable tenants. She said: “It was a pleasure speaking to staff from Wheatley and hearing about their incredible response to the coronavirus pandemic.

“With support from the Scottish Government’s Food Fund and Wellbeing Fund, Wheatley ensured that a huge number of individuals and families received the help they needed at a critical time.”



In September, Minister for Local Government Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, held a virtual meeting with a further group of Wheatley Group staff.

Mr Stewart praised the incredible efforts of Wheatley to help people during the coronavirus crisis.

The Housing Minister told staff: “I wanted to let you know how much the Scottish Government appreciates what you’ve done.

“Wheatley Group has been quite exceptional in terms of supporting people and keeping them safe during this very challenging time. Staff should be proud of all the work they are doing.”

### Thank you to our generous supporters!

The Foundation would like to thank all our supporters, partners, contractors and suppliers for their generous support this year.

**They include:** the Wylie Family, Shepherd and Wedderburn, MAST Architects, Unison Housing and Care Scotland, Brodies, Unico, Ashleigh (Scotland) Ltd, SERS Energy Solutions, RSM Risk Assurance Services, G3 Consulting Engineers and Mercer Ltd.