

Annual Complaints Report 2022/23



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Wheatley Group

Wheatley Group operates across all of Scotland providing social housing, shared ownership, factoring services, and private sector housing. Effectively using the complaints and compliments we receive to improve service is a vital part of our work. These form part of our wider customer engagement framework and help us to identify areas to develop or change services.

Customers are at the heart of developing our services. We use all sorts of events to get feedback including surveys, walkabouts, activity days and focus groups. Your feedback has helped us to develop and improve many of our services in the past year and customers are already involved in changes this year. Join our Customer Voice programme to ensure you are at the heart of these activities.

Learning from complaints

We analyse our complaints to identify themes which will help us to improve service. We regularly report to our Executive Team on what we have learned and improved.

You said – We did

Here are some examples of what you reported and how we have improved.



Although the number of complaints received about repairs represents only approximately 1% of all repairs, our learning showed that some of these were due to the level of communication about appointments. These issues left customers disappointed with the repairs service. Some similar feedback was received at our wider engagement events.



We have piloted and implemented a 'Book it, Track it, Rate it' service. This allows customers to book appointments and track progress as the appointment comes nearer. It provides confirmation of the appointment at time of booking as well as providing reminders. Customers were at the heart of developing the service from day one. The service has been rolled out across Wheatley Homes East, Wheatley Homes Glasgow and Loretto, with Wheatley Homes South to follow in the autumn. This should help customers get the information they need about appointment times and tracking of progress. Customers will continue to be involved as we refine and develop the system.



The new service also allows customers to feed back their views on how well the repair was completed straightaway. This means we can resolve issues much more quickly and provides more information on our customers' views.



We have expanded our process for contacting customers where we do not get access for a repair and will continue to review this over the coming year.



We know that repairs are one of the most important issues to customers. As a result of this our tenant scrutiny panel have decided to look at aspects of this service as part of a thematic study during 2023/24. This will help to direct further enhancement of the service.



Learning from complaints



You said

We get a number of complaints relating to how we allocate homes. We have a choice based lettings system that allows registered applicants to choose which homes they wish to note interest in based on the priority their application has been awarded. Some of the complaints we have received show that people are not always clear about the band they are in or how the process works.



We did

We reviewed our allocations process in 2022 with our customers. You told us that combining LivingWell properties and medical needs in the same priority group was confusing. We have now created separate priority groups for applicants with these needs.



We did

At the same time, we consulted with customers in Wheatley Homes South about changing the allocation policy and system there to a choice-based approach with more ability to do things online. Customers were very keen to have this change and the new policy and system are now in place.



You said

Water ingress issues appeared a few times amongst our repairs complaints. Customers felt that we had not resolved the issue on the first visit.



We did

A new end to end plumbing guide was introduced to ensure all trades staff were clear on what work needed to be done.



You said

One customer sent us a complaint because they had been left without cooking facilities or window curtains/blinds when we moved them in to decant accommodation.

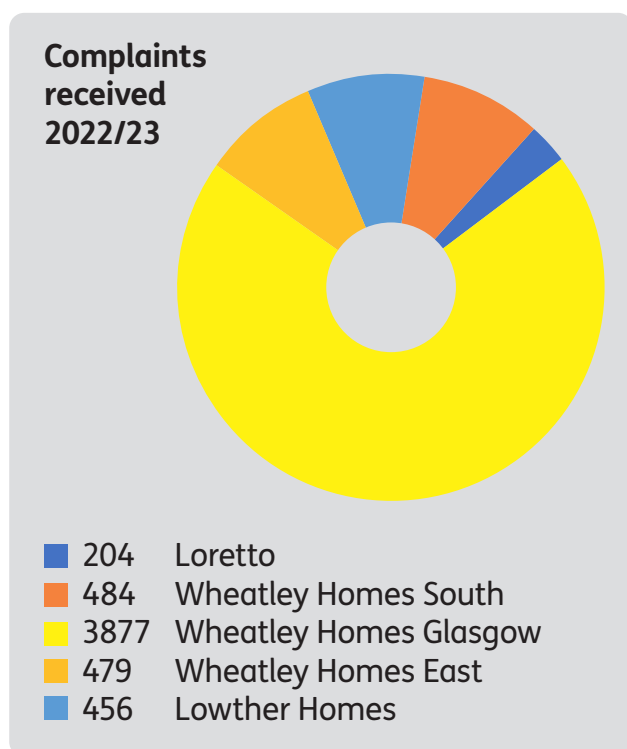


We did

We are updating our decant guidance to make sure that this is clear on the procedures to be followed. The revised procedures will be shared with all housing officers to ensure we are consistent in our approach.

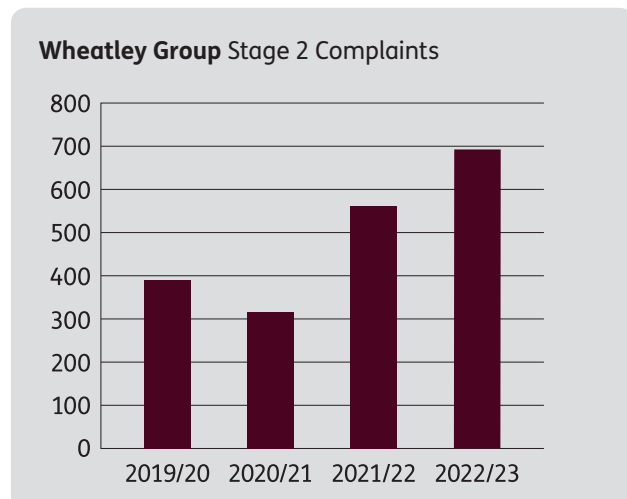
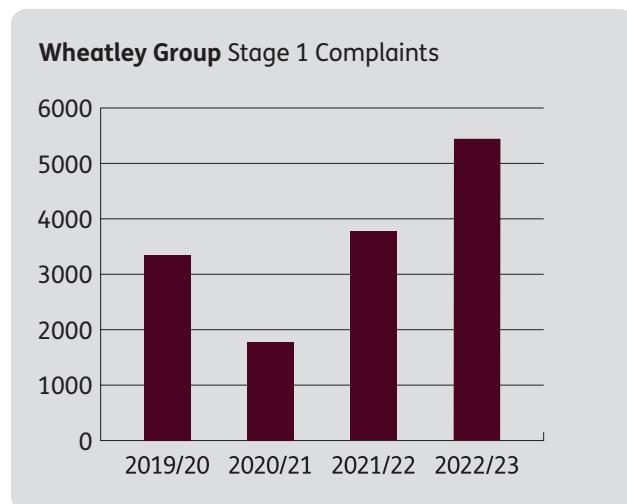
Complaints trends and performance

The chart below confirms the number of complaints received across Wheatley Group in 2022/23. There are five subsidiaries involved in delivering housing services to customers throughout Scotland.



Complaint trends

The number of complaints received reduced significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic but have steadily increased above pre-pandemic levels. This is a consistent trend across both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received. Based on information in the Annual Return on the Charter our increase in complaints is higher than that for Scotland as a whole. However, our complaints also include areas of service not included in the Charter. We have also increased the robustness of our recording through increased training and visibility for all frontline staff.



Complaints trends and performance

Complaint handling performance

We aim to respond to Stage 1 complaints within five working days and Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days.

The table below confirms the percentage of complaints completed within the timescales. Complaints taken 'direct' to Stage 2 include those where multiple issues are raised requiring a detailed investigation. Analysis of our complaints confirms that most complaints received at Stage 2 have been escalated from Stage 1.

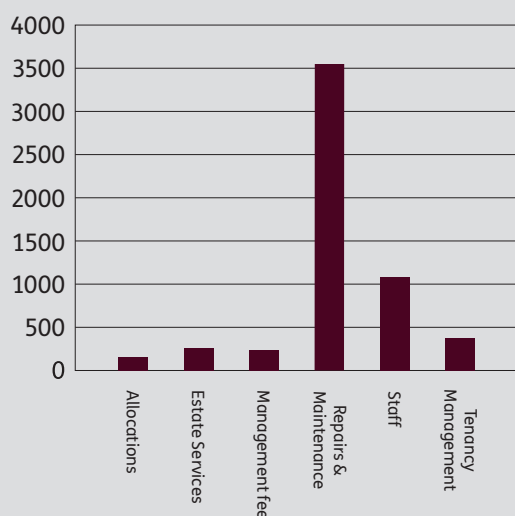
	Stage 1 Responded to within five working days	Stage 2 (Direct)	Stage 2 (Escalated)
Wheatley Homes South	92.75%	100%	95.74%
Wheatley Homes Glasgow	88.11%	90.63%	93.46%
Loretto	97.49%	N/A	96.00%
Wheatley Homes East	91.85%	100.00%	95.45%
Lowther	90.16%	100.00%	96.08%



Complaints trends and performance

Repairs and maintenance is the most common topic for complaints.

Top 6 Complaint Categories



Repairs service: across Wheatley Group we received over 300,000 repairs requests in 2022/23. These can cover emergency repairs, general repairs and repairs to common areas.

Staff: where we receive a complaint about a member of staff, line managers will normally interview those concerned. Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate actions are taken including additional training and support. Disciplinary processes are instigated if these are necessary. Confidentiality means we cannot report the detail of actions taken in relation to staff. Some complaints recorded as staff complaints may be because they are unable to do what a customer wants, for example where we do not provide the service.

Tenancy management: typically, these relate to issues raised about a commitment in the tenancy agreement which the complainer believes has not been met. We will review the issues reported to us and consider if there are ways to improve service delivery even where these are not strictly a failure in commitments.



Complaints trends and performance

Allocations: we operate an online choice-based allocations system and customers are invited to note their interest in properties that we advertise as available to let. Complaints in this area often relate to the length of time it may take to get a home. This is influenced by the demand for and supply of homes in each area. We have recently improved the information on the availability of homes to help customers make decisions about where to bid.

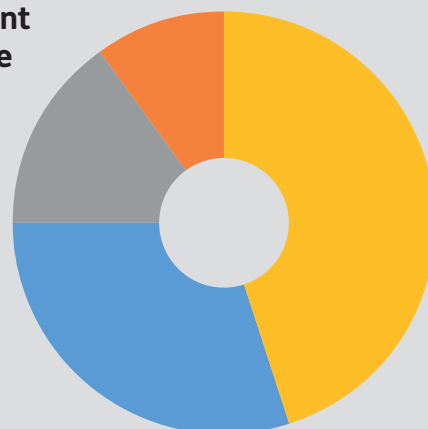
Estate services: complaints in this area often relate to our stair cleaning service, back court maintenance and landscape works to land that we are responsible for maintaining.

Management fee: Lowther provides factoring services for homeowners on behalf of the Registered Social Landlords within Wheatley Group and to some other customers. Complaints raised in this category typically relate to account issues experienced or invoices issued for a share of repairs or investment works.

Our aim is to get services right first time although we recognise that things can occasionally go wrong, and service was not delivered as we had expected. We will apologise for this and resolve the issues reported to us. The charts below confirm the outcome of complaints received at both Stage 1 and Stage 2.

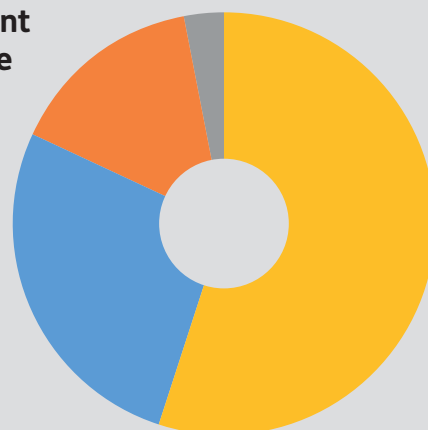


Stage 1 complaint outcome



1502	Not upheld
564	Partially upheld
738	Resolved
2439	Upheld

Stage 2 complaint outcome



226	Not upheld
102	Partially upheld
7	Resolved
357	Upheld

Compliments

Customers often take the time to tell us when we have done things well or made a difference to their lives. Some of the examples we have received recently are:



The fuel advisor has gone above and beyond her role to help me. She has been incredible at offering the right support to get me out of a difficult situation. She is a star at her job.

Thanks for the repairs that were carried out today – the lads that did the work were brilliant.

Thank you to the painters who came to my home today. From the minute they came in they were polite, pleasant and kind. They have done a really good job and tidied up very well when they were finished. Keep up the good work.

Thank you to the tradesman that attended my home today. He was brilliant in a fraught situation and went above and beyond expectations to complete a difficult job.

I had a visit from two housing officers today. They were really understanding of my situation after breaking my hip. They are just magic.

Thank you to the call handler for all his help on the phone today.

A huge thank you to your team who carried out a door replacement for my elderly neighbour today. They were very patient and showed genuine care. They are great assets to your organisation.

My blocked toilet was fixed the next morning. The tradespeople were pleasant, clean and tidy. They saved my weekend.

Case studies

'Customer A' complained that his housing officer had not returned two telephone calls.

Our response: The Housing Officer was on annual leave at the time and therefore had not returned the calls to their work mobile phone. We upheld this complaint as the housing officer had not put the correct voice message on the phone to direct the customer to our 24/7 Customer First Centre. Our Customer First Centre is always the best method of contacting your housing officer, reporting a repair or for any other queries. We are able to resolve 89% of enquiries while you are on the phone and our advisors are also able to arrange an appointment for your housing officer to visit you if required.

'Customer B' complained that we had not been collecting and emptying blue bins at the property.

Our response: We advised the customer that bin collections are the responsibility of the local council and the complaint was not upheld. However, we did raise this with refuse services in the relevant local authority and provided the customer with the details of where to report issues in the Council.

'Customer C' told us that they thought it was unfair that we would not consider allowing them to install an electric charging point for their vehicle.

Our response: We acknowledged that in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the SSTA that reasonable consideration should have been given to the request. We have now put in place a new procedure to consider such requests and have implemented this across the Group. We reviewed our initial decision and allowed the customer to install a charging point.

'Customer D' Told us they were unhappy with the length of time taken to hear about the outcome of their application for a Lowther property.

Our response: We acknowledged that due to the number of applications received it was taking longer than usual to respond to everyone. Lowther are now integrating with the Group's 'My Housing' system. This will ensure all applicants receive an immediate response on the outcome of their housing application as soon as the successful person has been selected.

What's next

We will continue to roll out our 'Book it, Track it, Rate it' repairs service across Wheatley Group. We anticipate this will help reduce the number of no access or failed repairs appointments.

We will promote the use of our e-learning complaint handling training to staff working in our repairs teams so that they can access this at any time as a refresher on handling complaints.

We will encourage staff within our Customer First Centre to continue to raise and resolve complaints during the first contact they have with customers. To do this we will identify areas where our staff may need further training or support.

We will roll out our complaints dashboard to all staff so they can stay updated with our complaints performance.

Scottish public services ombudsman

The SPSO published its review of the Complaints Handling Procedure in January 2020 and all public sector organisations were required to adopt this guidance from 1 April 2021. Our process follows this guidance. In addition to providing reports on our complaint handling performance to our boards on a quarterly basis, the SPSO required organisations to publish an annual complaints report from October 2023.

In partnership with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), and other housing organisations throughout Scotland, we actively participate in the Scottish Complaint Handlers Network, where members promote and share best practice in relation to complaint handling.

