

# Annual Report to Tenants

Glasgow Housing Association  
Highlights and performance  
2020-21



**Welcome to the Annual Report to Tenants for 2020-21. 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.

The impact of the pandemic on customers, and our strict adherence to social distancing, meant we did not carry out our annual customer satisfaction survey this year.

The Regulator allows social landlords to use the same indicators for up to three years. As a result, the tenant satisfaction figures reported here – which we also gave to the Regulator – are from the year 2019-20. Those figures are highlighted with an asterisk (\*).

We will carry out another full customer satisfaction survey in 2022.



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# Welcome

## from GHA Chair **Bernadette Hewitt**



The year will be remembered as an exceptionally difficult one, with extraordinary circumstances affecting GHA, our staff, and most importantly, our customers.

The pandemic left many tenants facing severe financial hardship this year and I'm incredibly proud of the way GHA responded in providing vital support to tenants and their families when they needed us most.

Our emergency food service EatWell, for example, supported 5309 GHA households with emergency food packs or supermarket vouchers, while our Emergency Response Fund helped 2178 GHA customers with one-off essential purchases ranging from fridges to mobile phone top-ups. Despite the restrictions we faced, we still carried out more than 110,000 repairs and housed over 3000 families across Glasgow.

GHA staff also stayed in contact by phone, text and online with tenants suffering from the effects of isolation. That reassurance that GHA was looking out for tenants was often as important as practical help in this most difficult of years.

Despite the unparalleled circumstances and restrictions on our activities this year, we built 276 new homes over the year, invested more than £29m in planned improvements to our homes and communities and supported 80 people from our homes into work and training.

The effects of the pandemic will be with us for some time, but our strong position as part of Wheatley Group, our Think Yes culture and our track record in rapidly developing new services to support our customers means we can be confident in facing future challenges.

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 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](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

The pandemic left many GHA customers facing severe financial hardship in 2020-21.

**While the safety of our staff and customers remained our absolute top priority throughout the year, our focus was on providing rapid support and personalised help to customers and their families.**

Throughout the year our staff did everything possible to support tenants and their families 24/7.

Housing officers working from home made tens of thousands of welfare calls to ensure those in crisis got immediate support.

We stayed in close contact with tenants as much as possible, particularly those who were vulnerable and isolated. This helped us target support to those who needed it. Many were claiming benefits for the first time, and others were unaware of just how much support GHA could provide.

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

Over the year:

- 5309 GHA households were supported with emergency food packs or supermarket vouchers through EatWell;
- 2178 GHA customers benefitted from one-off essential purchases ranging from fridges to

mobile phone top-ups through the Emergency Response Fund;

- 368 tenants were provided with free up-cycled furniture through our Home Comforts service; and
- 5331 GHA households received a £30 supermarket voucher to help with Christmas purchases.

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.

As well as the difficulties posed by the pandemic, Universal Credit continued to present new challenges and hardship for many. A quarter of GHA customers are now on Universal Credit, an increase of 8% from last year.

We continued to support our customers through the challenges they faced during the pandemic, including attending online tribunals with the Department of Work and Pensions to represent vulnerable customers.

Our expert welfare benefits advisors and fuel advisors supported 3294 GHA customers over the year, and helped them claim almost £6.9m in benefits and tax credits they were entitled to. We also helped customers access external funding



The Panel would like to congratulate the Group on their overall performance despite the challenges of the pandemic. We are especially pleased with the additional help provided to vulnerable customers and the continued success of the wraparound support services such as the delivery of EatWell food packages. The Panel met with subsidiary Managing Directors (MDs) to discuss performance during the pandemic, which gave us a holistic view of how the Group was performing despite the restrictions that were in place.

to alleviate fuel poverty. The support we provided meant many tenants avoided falling into rent arrears.

We will continue to support our customers over the next year with the difficulties posed by Universal Credit and the impact of the pandemic.

Working with Wheatley Foundation and Wheatley 360, we:

- created 80 opportunities for our customers to get into work or training;
- supported 989 new tenants with household budgeting, running a home and settling into their community through My Great Start;
- awarded 48 young people from our homes a bursary to go to university or college; and
- provided free books every month to 433 children under five in our homes through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library initiative.

While our allocations were suspended in the early part of 2020-21, we resumed letting in August and allocated homes to those in priority need, mainly homeless households.

Over the year, GHA allocated 1561 homes to

homeless people and also ‘flipped’ 86 temporary furnished homes, turning them into permanent homes for the homeless people living in them. We also provided more than 80 homes to new tenants under the Housing First approach, a multi-agency partnership set up to tackle rough sleeping.

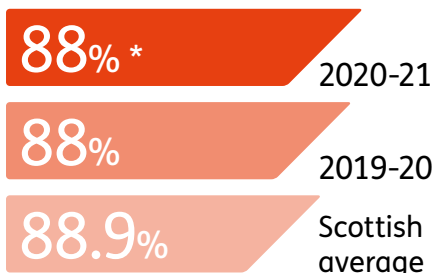
We recognised the challenge all local authorities faced in fulfilling their statutory duty to the homeless, as well as the greater risk the Coronavirus posed to homeless people. Over the year, Wheatley provided 474 homes to local authorities to use as temporary accommodation for homeless people.

This represented a huge contribution to tackling homelessness and rough-sleeping not only in Glasgow, but across the country. Wheatley’s purchase of the Bellgrove Hotel, a private hostel in Glasgow’s east end, at the end of 2020-21 was the latest part of the Group’s commitment to reducing homelessness in Scotland.

Medical adaptations were suspended at the start of 2020-21 due to Scottish Government restrictions and the need to maintain social distancing to keep customers and staff safe. We contacted tenants affected to assure them we would reschedule adaptations after restrictions were lifted and it was safe to do so.

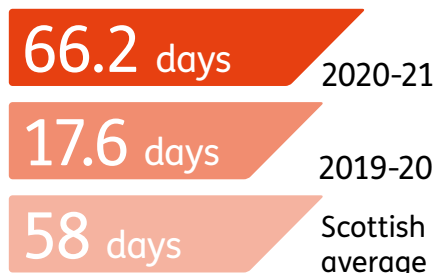
### Overall satisfaction

Tenants satisfied with the overall service



### Medical adaptations

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



### Complaints

Average time for full response to complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2 combined (working days)



\*Same figure as last year (see page 2)

# Improving our services

**The coronavirus crisis changed how we delivered services in 2020-21, with the safety of customers and staff remaining our top priority throughout the year.**

With housing staff and customer service advisors working from home, repairs and maintenance staff and Neighbourhood Environmental Teams continued their essential work out and about in GHA communities, while following strict safety guidelines to keep our customers and staff safe.

At the start of the year, repairs services were limited to emergency and essential repairs, along with gas safety checks and servicing. Investment work crucial in terms of health and

safety, including the installation of smoke and heat detectors, continued throughout the year. Non-essential internal investment work was suspended due to Scottish Government Covid restrictions.

Our Neighbourhood Environmental Teams prioritised fire-safety patrols, bulk uplifts and the cleaning of multi-storey blocks in GHA communities.

The concierge service in our multi-storeys also provided a vital lifeline for many tenants, helping them deal with isolation and on occasion picking up essential items such as prescriptions for tenants stuck at home.



**GHA responded quickly and decisively to changes in government guidance over the year.**

When lockdown restrictions were temporarily eased, we increased the range of services we could carry out, such as close-cleaning and a wider range of repairs, but reverted back to emergency and essential services as restrictions tightened again.

Our new-build programme, suspended at the start of 2020-21, resumed in June.

At all times we did everything possible to protect both customers and staff through strict adherence to health-and-safety practices and the use of the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The year 2020-21 was a difficult one for everyone, but we will do all we can to learn lessons from the pandemic to help make our services even better than before.



The Panel also met with senior officers, including the Performance and Procurement Lead to discuss customer focused performance measures. The Panel was pleased to be involved in the design and development of these measures and believes that they focus on the correct areas which are important to customers; repairs, environment, complaints, anti-social behaviour, and housing allocations. The Panel will continue to scrutinise the Group's performance against the agreed measures.

# Homes and communities

## Building new homes

Despite all the challenges we faced, GHA built 276 new affordable homes over the year, a mix of social rent and mid-market rent.

Our completed new homes included:

- 88 for social rent at Linkwood, Drumchapel;
- 49 homes for social rent at Scaraway Street, Milton;
- 57 homes for social rent at Auchinlea, Easterhouse;
- 27 for social rent at Bellrock, Cranhill;

We also progressed work on another 80 homes at Auchinlea, 53 at Bellrock Street and 48 at Kennishead Avenue. Work is underway on 22 new homes at Carnwadric Road/Hopeman Road, and 26 at Damshot Crescent, Pollok.

**276**

new homes built  
in 2020-21

## Investing in our homes

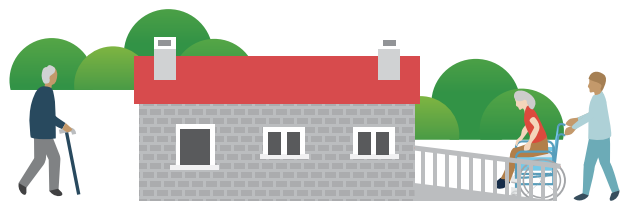
Despite the restrictions, in 2020-21 we delivered £29.9m of improvements to our homes and communities.

This included:

- £1.8m on heating upgrades for 911 homes;
- £1.4m on 110 kitchen renewals, 100 new bathrooms and rewiring in 102 homes;
- £1.3m on new lifts in the high-rise blocks at Townhead;
- £1.3m on new emergency lighting in our high-rise blocks;

New CCTV was installed in high-rise blocks at Cathkinview, Drygate, Archerhill and Northland Drive, while the blocks at Townhead benefited from improved entrances and foyers, the Helenvale flats had landings decorated and almost 4,000 homes benefitted from new smoke and heat detectors.

Our new build developments continued to be recognised with a number of awards. GHA's transformation of former police stables at Bell Street won the Affordable Housing Category at the Scottish Design Awards and Renovation of the Year at the Scottish Home Awards, while our development at Hinshelwood Drive in Govan was a finalist in the Large Development of the Year at the Homes for Scotland Awards.





## Improving our neighbourhoods

**Despite the restrictions this year, we continued our work to create clean and safe neighbourhoods people are proud to live in. As local authorities suspended bulk uplifts, our Neighbourhood Environmental Teams provided that service in GHA communities. Across Wheatley communities, 160 tonnes of bulk waste were removed every week.**

Our sector-leading partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) continues to see staff and customers assess the environment in our neighbourhoods.

### The number and type of GHA homes as of 31 March 2021

Self-contained stock			
Stock by apartment size and rent	Total units	Number of lettable units	Average weekly rent
1 Apt	2683	2664	£72.33
2 Apt	7378	7363	£81.95
3 Apt	20,459	20,379	£87.41
4 Apt	8077	8035	£102.20
5 Apt +	1268	1268	£112.01
Total self-contained	39,865	39,709	£89.16

(Average rents are based on lettable stock only)

We're delighted to say ten of our neighbourhoods have achieved a five-star rating from KSB, with another five working towards the same rating in assessments over the coming year.

Wheatley's Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) – made up of seconded police and fire officers and our own staff – continued to work with GHA communities to tackle anti-social behaviour, crime and fire safety. We resolved 100% of anti-social behaviour cases reported to us over the year.

While Covid restrictions meant most home fire safety visits were suspended over the year, we continued to support customers over the phone and online and delivered pioneering products such as fire-retardant bedding and air fryers to over 100 GHA tenants.

We also carried out Fire Safety Risk Assessments in 27 multi-storey blocks and in ten other GHA homes to help protect customers from the risk of fire. Despite the pandemic and the fact that people spent an increased amount of time at home over the year, the total number of accidental fires in Wheatley homes fell by 5.3%.

We will continue to work with customers and communities to build on the high level of satisfaction with GHA's contribution to the management of their neighbourhood.

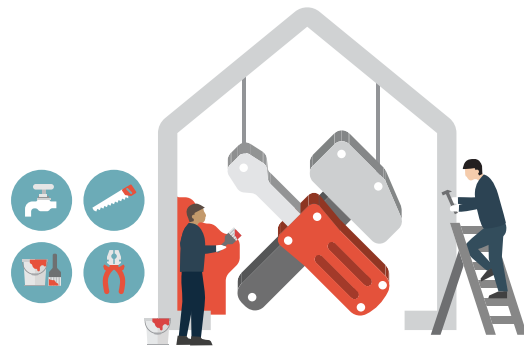
# Your repairs service

At the start of 2020-21, our repairs and maintenance service was restricted to emergency and essential services only.

**Throughout the year, our overriding priority was the safety of our staff and customers.**

As lockdown restrictions were temporarily eased, we were able to increase the range of essential repairs we could carry out, but reverted back to emergency and essential services as restrictions tightened again.

Despite the challenges of strict health and safety guidelines, new procedures to keep people safe, as well as restrictions on travel, GHA still managed to deliver more than 111,000 reactive repairs over the year.



We understand the provision of many Group services was impacted by the exceptional circumstances of Covid-19, for example the repairs service, and are pleased with the progress made so far in the remobilisation of these services. In particular, we are happy with the improvement in repairs being completed right first time which is a significant improvement since our previous review.

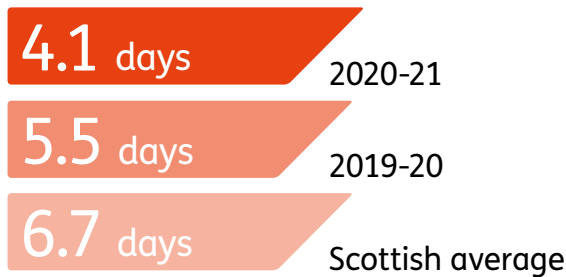
**Despite the difficulties we faced this year, the average time to complete non-emergency repairs was reduced to 4.1 working days, down from 5.5 working days the year before.**

The percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time, 96.3%, was the same as last year.

Satisfaction with repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months stood at 87.5%, down from 94.3% the year before. We will continue to work hard to improve on this for next year.

### Non-emergency repairs

Average time to complete non-emergency repairs

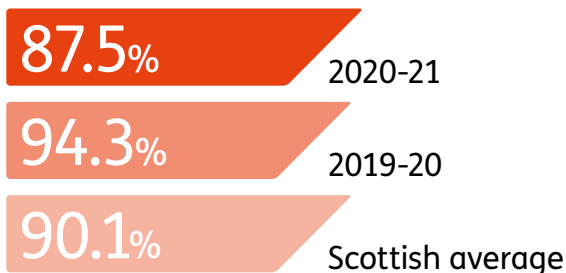


### Gas safety

Like all social landlords, GHA 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. Scottish Government restrictions, and the fact many customers were shielding, meant there were 1536 times this year 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.

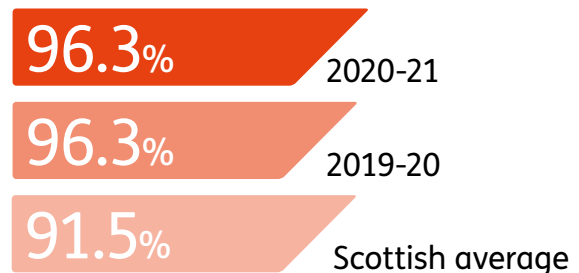
### Repairs and maintenance

Satisfaction with repairs or maintenance in last 12 months



### Reactive repairs

Reactive repairs completed right first time



# Rent and value for money

We know how difficult last year was for our tenants, and many will continue to face challenges posed by the impact of the pandemic.

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



**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. In 2020-21, 5086 customers across Wheatley were registered for MySavings, an increase of 1470 from the previous year.

Despite the extraordinary difficulties posed by the pandemic and the severe financial hardship faced by many customers, we managed to maintain high levels of performance across the indicators reported each year to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

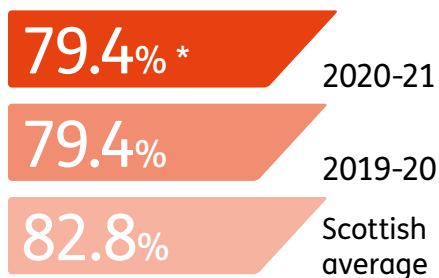
Our gross rent arrears remained the same as last year at 4.8%, while rent collection increased from 98.3% to 99.4%.

The average days to let properties figure reflects the fact that Scottish Government restrictions meant we were unable to let homes for part of the year.

The impact of the pandemic will be with us for some time to come, and we will continue to do all we can to help tenants overcome the difficulties they face and ensure they feel their homes and services are good value for money.

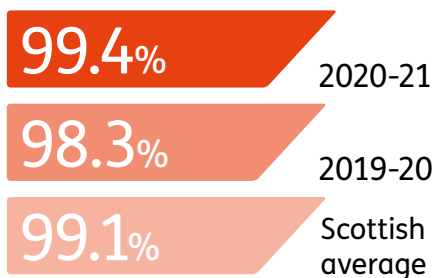
**Value for money**

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



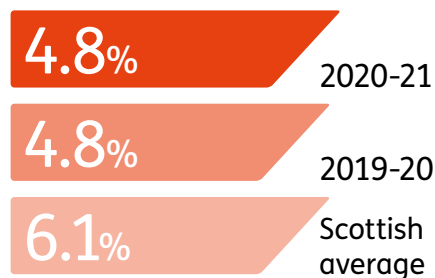
**Rent collected**

Rent collected as a percentage of total rent due



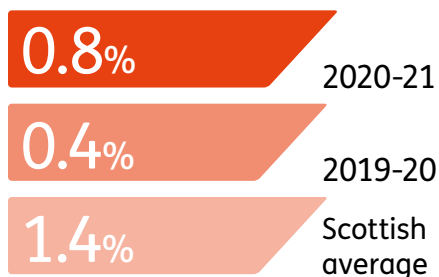
**Rent arrears**

Gross rent arrears



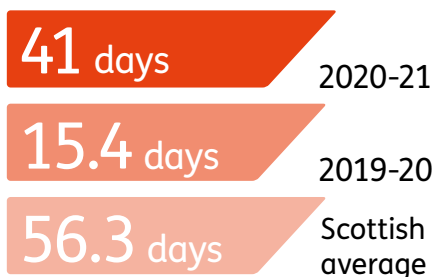
**Rent lost**

Rent lost through properties being empty



**Re-let properties**

Average length of time taken to re-let properties



\*Same figure as last year (see page 2)

# Engaging with customers

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

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



We acknowledge the importance of tenant engagement and the opportunity for customers to give their views and have ownership over their communities. The Panel met with the MD of Dunedin Canmore to give our feedback on the new Group engagement framework, Stronger Voices, Stronger Communities. We are looking forward to the implementation of this and will work closely with the Stronger Voices team to improve customer engagement and encourage participation.

**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.**

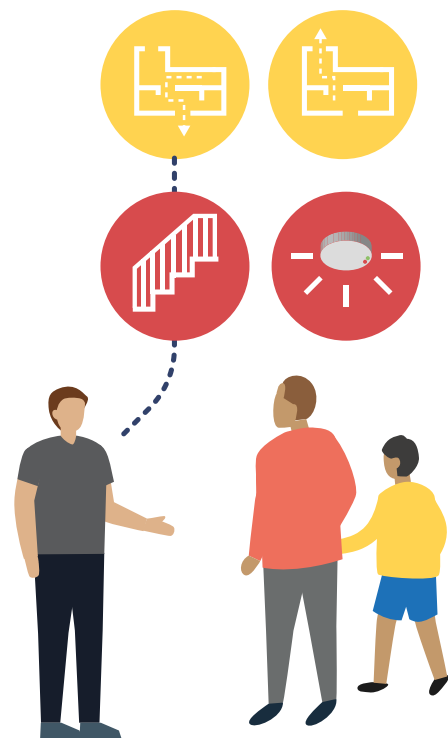
We continued to embed our innovative new approaches to services and supporting our customers. Housing officers, for example, introduced new ways of talking with customers online, such as through WhatsApp, FaceTime and Zoom.

GHA’s online channels and services, which offer our customers easy and convenient ways to pay bills, book appointments and access advice and information, continued to grow in size and popularity.

By the end of the financial year, more than 55% of GHA customers had registered for an online account with us. More than 25,400 people used the GHA website every month.

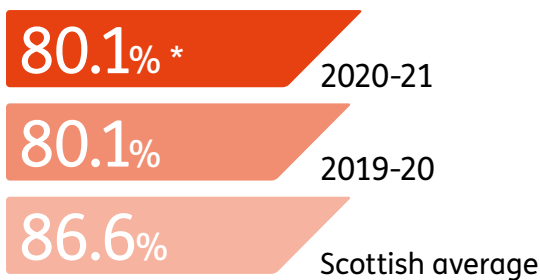
The number of followers on our social media channels this year was 21,711, an increase of 2139 from the year before.

We know how important it is for tenants to be informed about services and decisions and to have opportunities to be involved in decision-making. Our new engagement framework – Stronger Voices, Stronger Communities – will help us give customers more control over the services they want and create even more opportunities for all customers to be involved.



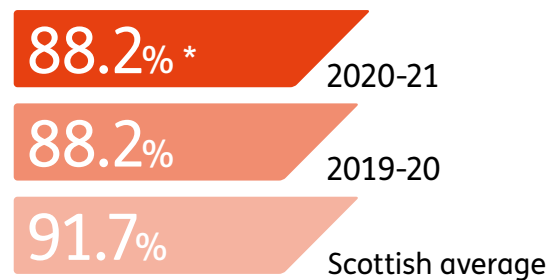
**Decision making**

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



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@gha.org.uk](mailto:talk@gha.org.uk) or phone us on 0800 479 7979.

\*Same figure as last year (see page 2)

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



Glasgow Housing Association.  
A registered Scottish Charity No. SC034054.