

Annual Complaints Report 2023-24



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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 customer 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.

You said

Repairs are the most frequent service our customers receive. Complaints received about repairs represent less than 2% of all repairs. In 2022-23 we introduced Book it, Track it, Rate it to help improve information about appointments. This year our analysis showed that some customers were frustrated by the number of visits required before a repair was carried out.

We did

We have introduced a new approach to reduce the number of repairs which require an inspector to visit. We have also rearranged our services to make sure as many repairs as possible are resolved on the first visit. This includes the ability for operatives to extend an appointment, a new approach to the materials carried in vans and in stores. Fifty new store items were brought into stock as a direct result of feedback. We have also introduced the potential to have items delivered quickly to the customers' house while the operative is still there.

We did

Based on feedback from customer engagement and complaints in 2022-23, our Tenant Scrutiny Panel decided to undertake a thematic review of communication around repairs. They looked at process maps, complaints, performance, customer satisfaction results and training programmes. The key findings were that communication is the most important part of a good repairs service and that effectiveness including cost and number of visits should be priorities. A total of 18 recommendations were made and these have been discussed with our Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Boards. A range of other recommendations were also accepted and the full report can be found [here](#). A new 'point of delivery' model has been developed to help strengthen efficiency and effectiveness.

This focuses work around trade groupings and has already been implemented in the west but will be rolled out across all subsidiaries. Initial results for the pilot showed a significant increase in satisfaction through our Book it, Track it, Rate it system.



Learning from complaints



You said

We receive a relatively high number of complaints in relation to billing for work done on behalf of Lowther owners. This was reinforced by findings from the Scrutiny Panel thematic review which confirmed that our billing process does not provide sufficient clarity for customers.



We did

We introduced new mobile working technology which allows customers to check online what work has been done or is upcoming and provides real time text updates. Customer First Centre staff and housing officers now also have visibility of this work so that they can respond immediately to customer enquiries.



We did

We undertook an initial review of our billing system in Autumn 2023 to improve descriptions and information as much as possible based on the current systems. Following this we have undertaken a detailed end to end mapping of the experience for customers in relation to common repairs. Later this year, we will introduce further clarification on the information in invoices, improved communication to owners particularly for longer repairs and a further review of the billing and information offered to customers. We recognise that the volume of complaints in this area is still high and will continue to work to improve the processes.

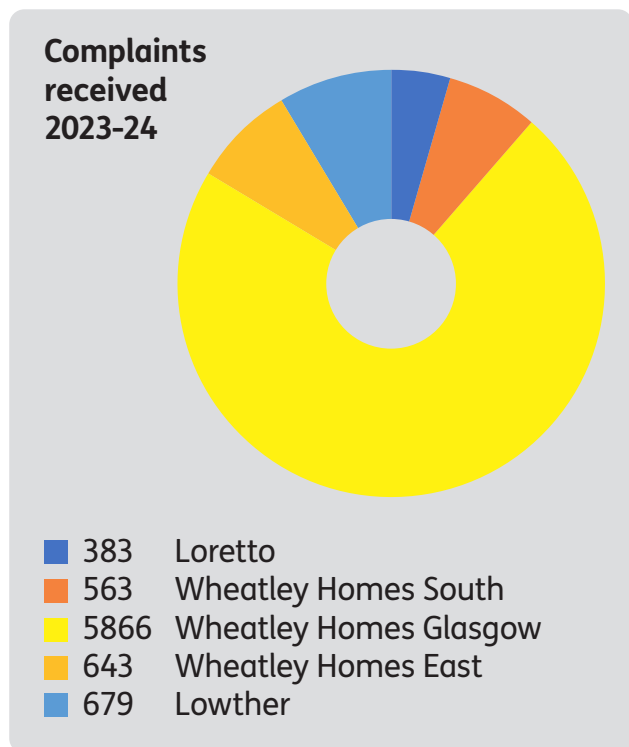


You said

That our communication about neighbourhood environmental services, such as stair cleaning and back court maintenance, could be better. Customers said they were not always clear what services they should receive and some of the work was not as visible as it should have been.

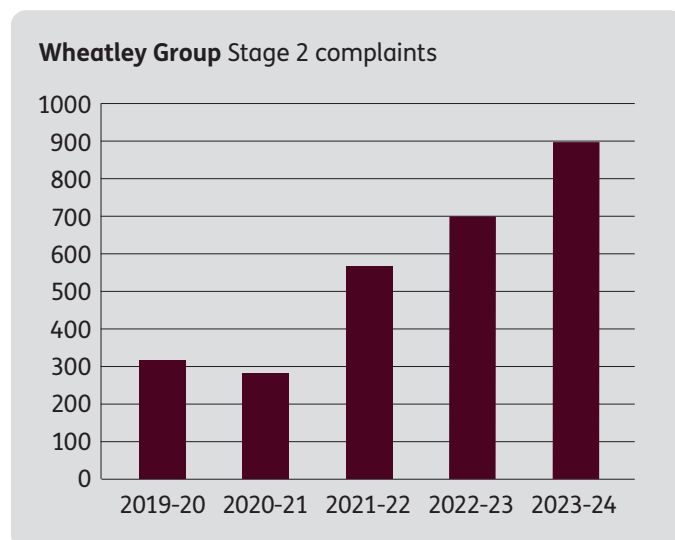
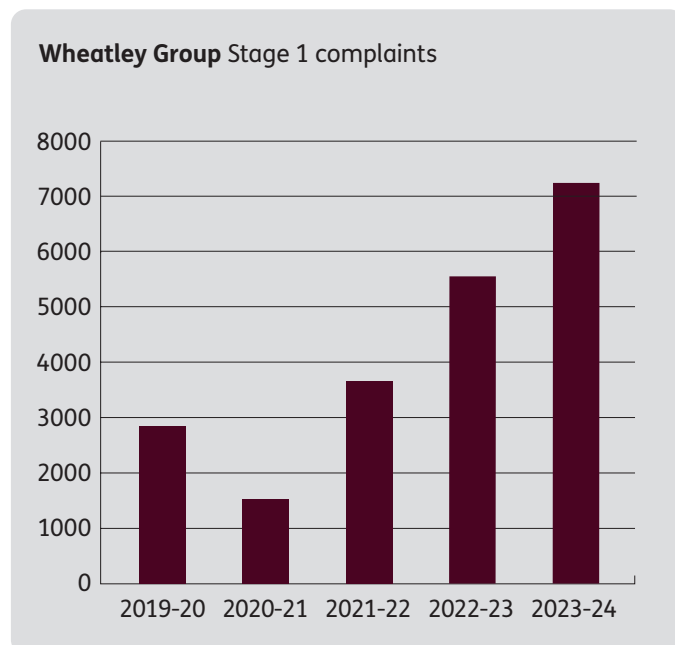
Complaints trends and performance

The chart below confirms the number of complaints received across Wheatley Group in 2023-24. There are five subsidiaries involved in delivering housing services to customers throughout Scotland. Complaints related to factoring services delivered by Lowther on behalf of one of our RSLs are included within the numbers for that RSL.



Complaint trends

In common with many organisations we have seen a steady increase in complaints since the Covid-19 pandemic, when numbers reduced significantly. We continue to ensure the robustness of recording of complaints through ongoing training, monitoring and engagement with customers.



Complaints trends and performance

Complaint handling performance

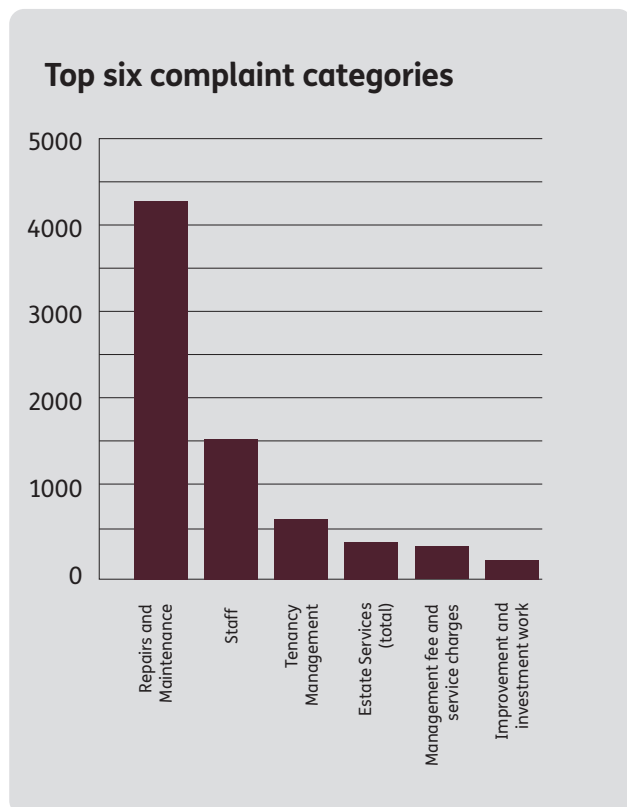
We aim to respond to Stage 1 complaints within five working days and Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days but much sooner wherever possible. The table below shows the percentage of complaints dealt with in timescale in 2023-24. Virtually all timescales have improved from the previous year. Complaints taken “direct” to Stage 2 include those where multiple issues are raised requiring a complex investigation. WHE had 10 direct Stage 2 complaints, two of which failed to meet the 20-day target.

	Stage 1 Responded to within five working days	Stage 2 Responded to within 20 working days	Escalated complaints Responded to within 20 working days
Wheatley Homes South	95.62%	100.00%	100.00%
Wheatley Homes Glasgow	92.54%	91.67%	98.40%
Loretto	96.82%	N/A	96.15%
Wheatley Homes East	95.70%	100.00%	100.00%
Lowther	91.91%	100.00%	99.00%



Complaints trends and performance

Repairs and maintenance continues to be the most common topic for complaints.



Repairs service: across Wheatley Group we received over 300,000 repairs requests in 2023-24. 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 implemented 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

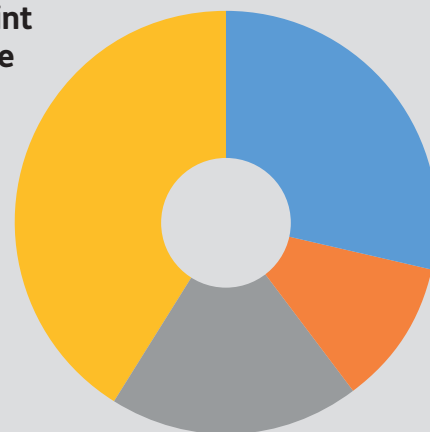
Allocations: we operate an online choice-based allocations system for our RSL properties. Customers are invited to note their interest in properties that we advertise as available to let. Complaints in this area often relate to the length of time it may take to get a home. This is influenced by the demand 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.

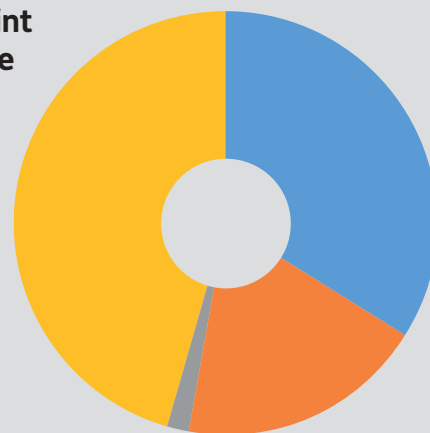
Our aim is to get services right first time although we recognise that things can occasionally go wrong and service was not delivered as we had expected. We will apologise where we get things wrong and resolve the issues reported to us. Over the last year we have increased the number of complaints we resolve in an initial investigation and reduced the number that need to be upheld.

Stage 1 complaint outcome



2025	Not upheld
798	Partially upheld
1354	Resolved
2898	Upheld

Stage 2 complaint outcome



303	Not upheld
168	Partially upheld
17	Resolved
404	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:

“I want to compliment the two joiners who attended today to fit my new front door. They did a great job, left no mess and explained how to use the door fully which I really appreciated.”

“The Neighbourhood Environmental Team staff member checks in on me when he is cleaning the close – I really appreciate this as my mental health is not good.”

“I am extremely happy with the repairs carried out today in my bathroom and want to pass on my thanks to both the plumber and the joiner. They have done a great job.”

“Thank you to all the repairs staff who have helped my son during flooding issues. He has several health issues and they have been very patient in listening to me explain the impact of these.”

“My housing officer is marvellous and I would give her 10/10.”

“The repairs inspector attended today and was excellent. He explained things very well and took time to listen to what I had to say.”

“Thank you to my housing officer for helping me to get a new bin for the property even though that is not a Wheatley service. I am very grateful.”

“Thank you to the CFC advisor who took my call last evening. I was very upset and she was very kind and helpful during the call. She even said I could call back in later if I was still upset. I really appreciate this.”

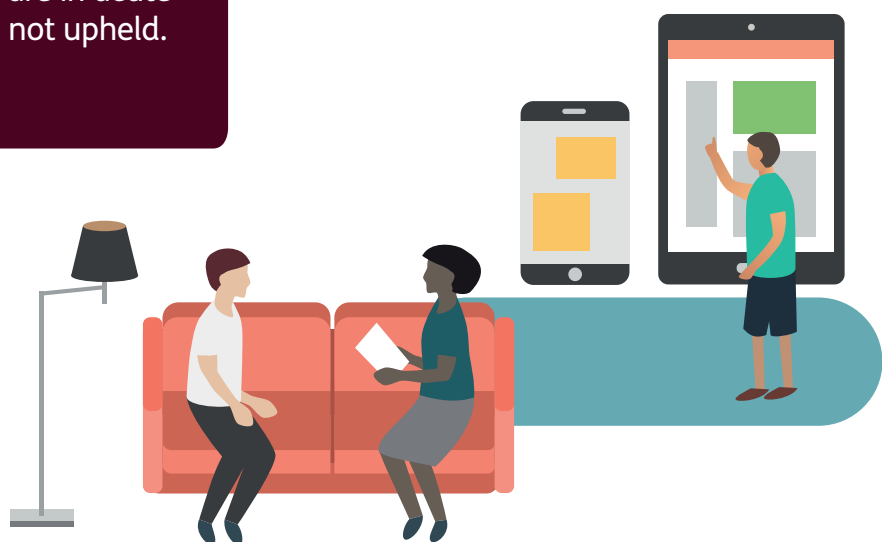
“Thank you to the plumber who attended today. I was very pleased with the work and the service.”

“As an owner occupier I find our NETs team fabulous. They go the extra mile to make sure our communal areas are kept tidy. It’s a hard task but they do it well. Its appreciated.”

Case study

A customer complained that they had not been allocated a suitable home within three months and that they felt not all houses were being advertised our choice based letting system.

Our response: We explained that many types of homes are in short supply and do not come up for let very often. This is particularly common for larger homes and adapted homes as well as in more popular areas. As part of our housing information and advice policy we match some properties to households who are in exceptional housing need and these do not get advertised on our system. We consulted with customers on this approach in 2022 and it had overwhelming support with 86% of those responding agreeing that this should be our approach. In addition, we support local authorities in assisting homeless households and a number of our homes are also directly matched to these households who are in acute need. This complaint was not upheld.



What's next

We are currently rolling out additional training for staff to help them to communicate well with customers, particularly when they are making a complaint. This has already been delivered to over 100 staff.

A key priority for this year will be to undertake a Vanguard analysis of the whole customer complaints journey to identify areas where we can both improve the process and reduce the need for customers to complain. As part of this we will undertake some initial consultation with customers on our Customer Voice panels to help direct our continuous improvement.

We continue to provide detailed analysis on complaints themes, particularly around repairs, in order to identify service improvements which meet customer needs. We also review our recording and responses to ensure we deliver the best possible service to our customers. This also helps us to ensure we maximise the learning from the information you give us.

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.



