



Wheatley Homes Glasgow

2023/24 Rent Setting – Engagement Focus Groups

Methodology and Sample

Focus groups were completed between the 14th – 28th November 2022, with a total of 137 Wheatley Homes Glasgow (“WH-G”) participants. Recruitment was managed by a Wheatley Group representative, using WH-G Customer Voices – tenants who have expressed an interest in participating in engagement activities –, which proved successful in engaging larger numbers of tenants than in previous years.

Date	Time	RSL (and area if applicable)	Platform	Number of Attendees
14 November 2022	10:00	WH-G (NE)	In person	18
14 November 2022	12:30	WH-G (NE)	In person	16
14 November 2022	18:00	WH-G (NE)	In person	12
16 November 2022	10:00	WH-G (S)	In person	16
16 November 2022	13:00	WH-G (S)	In person	17
16 November 2022	16:00	WH-G (S)	In person	5
17 November 2022	17:00	WH-G Ex Cube	Online	9
18 November 2022	10:00	WH-G (NW)	In person	24
18 November 2022	12:30	WH-G (NW)	In person	11
28 November 2022	14:30	WH-G	Online	6
28 November 2022	16:30	WH-G	Online	3
Total		11 groups		137 participants

A topic guide for the discussions was designed which focused around understanding tenants’ views on the following:

- Draft rent increase options of 3.9%, 4.4% and 4.9% in WH-G, with the exception of those in ex Cube Housing Association homes where the draft options were 1% or over 1%
- Priorities for services and investment given the above increases
- Implications of a possible rent freeze or very low cap if the Scottish Government was to confirm that this would apply under the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act for 2023/24.

The discussion structure was loosely split into five parts: introduction of the topic; a presentation delivered by the Wheatley Group representative; discussion of the proposed rent increases; implications of and priorities for services and investment given the above increases; views on and implications of a possible rent freeze or very low cap.

Groups took place either in person or online over Zoom, and all groups were moderated by a team of experienced qualitative researchers. For both online and in person sessions, respondents were assured that all information provided would be treated in the strictest confidence; that BMG would not identify any individuals or disclose the personal details of those who took part; and that views stated would not be attributable to individuals. BMG’s independence and impartiality from WH-G and the wider Wheatley Group was also reiterated, to ensure confidence amongst participants when sharing their views.

Findings Summary

Preferred rent increase

Nearly half of Wheatley Homes Glasgow (“WH-G”) tenants spoken to in focus groups opted for the lower increase of 3.9%.

Option	3.90%	4.40%	4.90%	None-want a freeze	None - prefer 6.5%
Figures*	58 (49.6%)	25 (21.4%)	22 (18.8%)	11 (9.4%)	1 (0.9%)

* Some participants opted not to give a preferred rent option/decision on the rent freeze

All ex-Cube tenants opted for their lower increase of 1%.

Key reasons for choosing lower options centre around affordability, or a view that WH-G should not need to charge more.

Some tenants agree that higher options would be better to ensure services perceived as good do not decline.

Rent Freeze

When discussing the potential for the Scottish Government to apply a freeze or cap on rent across the sector, most WH-G tenants thought that the rent freeze/cap would not be worth the loss of services. Around a third did want the freeze.

Option	Freeze	Rise
Figures*	32 (30.5%)	73 (69.5%)

* Some participants opted not to give a preferred rent option/decision on the rent freeze

Reasoning behind choices was similar to those around the rent options. Those who would prefer a freeze/cap cited affordability as the key issue but also had a perception that WH-G would be obliged to retain key services at existing levels.

Those that would prefer not to see a cap report that they want to see services maintained. They understand that it is inevitable due to inflation.

Those that were reluctant to give an answer did though because they felt their choice would not make a difference as ultimately WH-G- would have to do whatever the government chooses.

Priorities

While there are differences in the opinions of tenants in different areas across Wheatley Homes Glasgow (“WH-G”), the main priority was improving the repairs service. This relates to several factors including quality and communications, including communications with the call centre and housing officers relating to the repairs.

The Call Centre is widely viewed as a high priority, referred to as ‘the first point of contact’, ‘where you get the ball rolling’, and therefore critical, especially for emergency repair and for those who find it difficult to contact their housing officer.

Housing Officers are also widely prioritised because tenants see them as the interface when they *really* need to get something done – which is why it is felt to be so important that they are ‘visible’ and visit tenants in their own homes. Tenants value a ‘personal’ relationship with their housing officers.

Anti-social behaviour is seen as a priority, either for some tenants currently experiencing it or because tenants know that if they did it could seriously impact their lives. They believe that WH-G should seek to do more to ensure behaviour like this doesn’t arise in communities.

Home improvements that are considered priorities relate to issues like damp and improving heating systems rather than new kitchens/bathrooms, although the latter are still priorities amongst those still waiting.

For some older tenants who live in high rise flats (particularly Sandyhills and Castlemilk in Glasgow), their concierge service is a very high priority. As with housing officers, these tenants value a personal relationship with their concierge, who they feel keeps their block safe, and guards against anti-social behaviour or act as a mediator.

Tenancy sustainment, advice and guidance, and employability support services are seen as low priority by most tenants. Essentially, this is because they are the least universally experienced ones.