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Our mission at Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) has always been a simple one – to create ‘better homes and better lives’ for the 41,500 households we serve.

In 2008 the prospect of turning that mission into reality seemed a pipe dream. Customer satisfaction stood at just over 70%, performance was poor, a regulatory report told us we ‘must do better’ and our public image was at an all-time low. A further threat came in the shape of a tough economic climate - and there was worse still just around the corner. Plans by the UK Government to change welfare benefits would significantly reduce the income of our already hard-pressed customers.

Take a close look at GHA today and you see a very different picture. Customer satisfaction stands at over 90%, performance is up and our stakeholders regularly praise our work. “GHA is an organisation that is of iconic significance in Scotland and its extraordinary levels of customer and staff satisfaction are a substantial achievement,” said a leading civil servant recently.

So how was such a transformation achieved? The answer lies in developing capability across the organisation.

GHA transformed its culture by developing and empowering staff to

put the focus firmly on the customer and to make decisions quickly and effectively every time.

The first phase of our journey to excellence came through Common Systems, Common Sense. In 2008 we began to use systems thinking to re-organise our core processes to strip out waste and focus on delivering results for customers. Performance improved substantially. For example, the number of days it took to let homes reduced by 70% and bad debt by 50%.

In 2009 our Leadership team committed to using the EFQM Excellence Model as the key framework to help us deliver our ambition. By 2011 we achieved the maximum five-star EFQM Recognised for Excellence rating and were awarded the Scottish Award for Business Excellence by Quality Scotland.

But the real shift came through Think Yes, our staff empowerment campaign designed to give staff the confidence and skills to deliver tailored solutions for customers. Out went the command and control style of management and the culture of escalation. The power to delight customers lay in the hands of frontline staff who were trusted to make the right decisions at the first point of contact. Leaders took on the role of enablers, supporting



staff and removing issues stopping them saying 'yes' to customers. The campaign was launched with face-to-face events fronted by GHA's Chief Executive Martin Armstrong and sustained through high-impact communications and a development programme for leaders.

More efficient working and empowered staff have enabled GHA to reduce layers of management and divert more staff to dealing directly with customers.

Advisors at our 24-hour customer service centre have been developed to handle a wider range of customer inquiries, freeing up staff in our communities to handle more complex issues.

But more had to be done if we wanted to continue our journey to excellence while delivering good value for money.

In Spring 2012, GHA formed a partnership with Cube Housing Association. This paved the way for a new parent company - Wheatley Group - to be formed in 2012. The Group now brings together four social landlords including GHA, a care organisation and two commercial subsidiaries.

By working together, sharing resources, services and expertise with others, GHA can do more to help customers than it ever could have done on its own.

The Group's ability to attract financing from both public and private sources has been expanded with a proposed growth programme of over 4,500 homes.

And we are able to offer a wider range of innovative services to support tenants. That includes increased help to get into work, training or education, advice on money matters and a furniture recycling scheme to help tenants who do not have the means to furnish their house.

Last year EFQM recognised GHA's record of continuous improvement with the "Leading with Vision, Inspiration and Integrity" prize at the 2013 EFQM Finals in Vienna, Austria.

Our journey to excellence continues but GHA is now well and truly on the road to turning its mission 'to create better homes and better lives' into reality.

About Glasgow Housing Association

Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) is one of the largest social landlords in the United Kingdom with 41,500 affordable homes for rent.

A not-for-profit organisation, GHA is a registered charity, monitored and regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

GHA is part of Wheatley Group - Scotland's leading housing, care and regeneration group. The Group spans 12 local authority areas across central Scotland, providing home and award-winning services to over 100,000 tenants and factored homeowners.

Tenants are at the very heart of decisions as GHA creates 'Better homes, better lives, a better Glasgow'.