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MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thriving and Vibrant Economy Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday, 13 October 2020
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Held Virtually

AGENDA

Thriving & Vibrant Economy Workstream

Councillors Clarke, Ennis, Gollick, Green, Hand-Davis, Hunt, Lofts, Noble, Pickering, Richardson, Smith, and Sumner.

Administrative and Governance Issues for the Committee

1 **Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives**

To receive apologies for absence in accordance with Regulation 7 (6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 **Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest**

To invite Members of the Committee to make any declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest in connection with the items on this agenda.

3 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (*Pages 3 - 8*)

To note the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 8th September, 2020 (Item 3 attached).

Overview and Scrutiny Issues for the Committee

4 **Berneslai Homes** (*Pages 9 - 78*)

To consider a report of the Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes and the Executive Director Core Services, BMBC regarding an update on Berneslai Homes including the impact of Covid 19 (Item 4a attached), the Berneslai Homes Strategic Plan 2021-31 (Item 4b attached) and the Berneslai Homes Annual Report to Tenants 2019-20 (Item 4c attached).

Enquiries to Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officer

Email scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk

To: Chair and Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bowler, Carr, T. Cave, Clarke, Felton, Fielding, Frost, Gollick, Green, Daniel Griffin, Hand-Davis, Hayward, Higginbottom, Hunt, W. Johnson, Leech, Lodge, Lofts, Makinson, McCarthy, Mitchell, Newing, Noble, Phillips, Pickering, Richardson, Smith, Stowe, Sumner, Tattersall, Williams, Wilson and Wraith MBE together with Statutory Co-opted Member Ms. G Carter (Parent Governor Representative)

Electronic Copies Circulated for Information

Sarah Norman, Chief Executive

Shokat Lal, Executive Director Core Services

Rob Winter, Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management

Michael Potter, Service Director, Business Improvement and Communications

Martin McCarthy, Service Director, Governance, Members and Business Support
Press

Witnesses

Item 4 – 2pm

Amanda Garrard, Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes

Anthony Brown, Interim Director of Assets, Regeneration & Construction, Berneslai Homes

Kat Allott-Stevens, Tenants First Service Manager, Berneslai Homes

Matt Gladstone, Executive Director – Place, BMBC

Richard Burnham, Head of Housing & Energy, BMBC

Sarah Cartwright, Group Leader Housing Growth, BMBC

Tom Smith, Head of Employment & Skills, BMBC

Cllr Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson – Place – Regeneration & Culture, BMBC

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Full Committee - available on https://barnsley.public-i.tv/
DATE:	Tuesday, 8 September 2020
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Carr, T. Cave, Clarke, Gollick, Daniel Griffin, Hayward, Higginbottom, Hunt, W. Johnson, Leech, Lodge, Lofts, Makinson, Newing, Noble, Phillips, Richardson, Smith, Tattersall, Williams and Wraith MBE together with co-opted member Ms. G Carter

24 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

25 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

The following declarations of non-pecuniary interests were received:

Councillors Tattersall and Williams are members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and are Virtual School Governors; Councillor Newing works for the NHS, Councillor Lodge is a Virtual School Governor; Councillors Makinson and Carr are members of the Corporate Parenting Panel; Councillor Hayward is a member of the Fostering Panel and Gemma Carter is a Director of Alternative Education Provision.

26 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 12th May (Full Committee Meeting), 9th June (Thriving and Vibrant Economy Workstream), 9th July (People Achieving Their Potential Workstream) and 21st July (Strong and Resilient Communities Workstream) were approved as a true and accurate record.

Councillor Johnson requested that promised feedback with regard to concerns raised by Members regarding speeding in the Borough be shared with Members as soon as possible. Member were informed that this issue has been added to the scrutiny work programme and will be discussed in the meeting scheduled to take place on 1st December 2020.

27 Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB) Annual Report 2019-20

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Bob Dyson, Independent Chair, BSAB
Wendy Lowder, Executive Director – Adults & Communities, BMBC
Julie Chapman, Service Director – Adult Social Care & Health, BMBC
Cath Erine, Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board Manager, BMBC
Cllr Jenny Platts, Cabinet Spokesperson – Adults & Communities, BMBC

Susan Brook, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adults, Barnsley CCG
Becky Hoskins, Deputy Director of Nursing & Quality, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT)
Emma Cox, Assistant Director of Nursing, Quality & Professions, SWYPFT
Chief Superintendent Sarah Poolman, Barnsley District Commander, South Yorkshire Police (SYP) attempted to join the meeting; however, was unable to due to technical issues

Cllr Platts introduced the report, outlining the work of the Board and its local and regional partners over the last 12 months, emphasising the strong commitment to Safeguarding from all agencies as evidenced within the report.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge the following matters were highlighted:

It was acknowledged that substance misuse was having a great impact on vulnerable adults and the wider community. Substance abuse can often lead to other issues such as self-neglect and hoarding. There has been a lot of preventative work to keep people who are misusing substances and their family members safe. Substance abusers often present with a cocktail of issues and partnership working is essential, as evidenced by the work done by the organisation Humankind in terms of behaviour change and housing issues. There are specific challenges in some communities and an offer was made to discuss such specific issues outside of the meeting with individual members. Substance issue may be an area for Scrutiny to consider as part of its work programme.

It was reported that there are more safeguarding referrals from care homes than anywhere else although this has reduced from last year. Many of the issues do not require further action but are reported by care home providers in order to demonstrate that they take safeguarding seriously. Reassurances have been given to providers that if incidents and concerns are dealt with appropriately (i.e. using the decision support guidance and keeping records of concerns not shared with adult social care) they will meet the requirements set out by the CQC. Care homes are monitored and the training offer to care homes is to be increased, and the appointment of a multi-agency trainer will assist with this.

There is a regular programme of announced and unannounced visits to care homes carried out by BMBC, partners and the CQC to raise standards and offer challenge. A multi-agency Quality Improvement Panel is to be set up shortly and will use information from a variety of sources to pull together an analysis of issues and actions. All care homes have a Visitor's Book which is often well used. A member felt that care home workers should be commended for the work they do, particularly throughout the pandemic, and for their vocation and commitment to the role. It was acknowledged that there is a challenge in recruiting and retaining nurses

and carers in the private sector, particularly when pay rates for providing nursing care in private nursing homes are below those provided in the public sector.

Lessons have been learned from the case studies within the report and practice is shared across the whole system. The Adult Multi Agency Trainer will bring the case studies to life and will be used as a training tool. The post has gone out to advert and it is hoped the postholder will start work within the next couple of months. A quarterly newsletter is also produced for wider circulation. It was pointed out that all agencies have responsibilities towards their staff and there is always room for improvement.

Barnsley is at the forefront of work around self-neglect and hoarding and its policies and procedures have been adopted by others. It appears that the pandemic has helped to raise awareness of people living within the community with these issues, which have to be tackled tactfully as often people have lived this way for some time. Actual numbers relating to hoarding will be provided after the meeting.

Anecdotal information indicates that levels of domestic abuse have increased. Members were reassured that the lines of communication and liaison processes are robust between the hospital, the community and services, particularly emergency duty teams. Patients are subject to facilitated conversations and are signposted to services or can make a formal referral if they want to do that. The Violence Reduction plan is due to be brought to Cabinet shortly and Members will have the opportunity to contribute to it. The MARAC meets fortnightly and works closely with all partners including probation, adult and children's social care using a case management approach. IDAS has recently been received from the Ministry of Justice which will help with this work.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note the update and
- (ii) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution

28 Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) Annual Report 2019-20

The following witnesses were invited to the meeting:

Bob Dyson, Independent Chair, BSCP
Mel John-Ross, Executive Director, Children's Services, BMBC
Debbie Mercer, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
Nigel Leeder, Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager, BMBC
Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson – Children's Services
Tracy-Ann Taylor, Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT)
Angela Fawcett, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children, Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Emma Cox, Assistant Director of Nursing, Quality & Professions, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT)

Chief Superintendent Sarah Poolman, Barnsley District Commander, South Yorkshire Police (SYP) attempted to join the meeting; however, was unable to due to technical issues.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge the following matters were highlighted:

Bob Dyson introduced the report, explaining that this is the first report of the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) which replaced the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) from the beginning of April 2019, bringing together senior representatives from the statutory, voluntary, and community sectors with a responsibility for delivering services to children and young people. Managers and the BMBC design team were thanked for their contributions to the report.

Members were informed that the Partnership works in a similar way to the Board, with similar sub groups and working in a similar way. When the Board changed to a Partnership, the biggest change was that safeguarding was no longer the sole responsibility of the Council but is now a shared responsibility between the Council, Health and the Police. These three partners have stepped up to the mark with joint governance responsibility. The work of the partnership is constantly evolving in response to new threats, risks and guidance. The safeguarding of vulnerable children remains a priority and whilst there have been no cuts to funding, there is a need to ensure that partners continue to resource the partnership sufficiently to keep people safe. The Barnsley safeguarding partnerships (Adults and Children) have the smallest budgets in South Yorkshire and the lowest staffing levels, thus representing value for money, albeit with a smaller population. The Board Manager and Trainer have developed an innovative income stream for the partnership through providing training for the Safeguarding Lead Officers in schools. Although the Board Manager is very busy, the partnership is not looking for more money to support the partnership.

In terms of the 17-25 age group and transition arrangements, there are a number of children who will not meet the criteria for services but are nonetheless vulnerable. A new multi-agency panel is being developed and will meet later this month (having been impacted by Covid and the summer period). Terms of Reference have been agreed and the panel will look at young people who may have been involved with social care as younger children and who may find the transition to adulthood difficult. The Panel will bring together services such as work, training and college to ensure a seamless positive move into adulthood.

Although there appear to be no specific cases of children in Barnsley being exploited through online gambling, online exploitation of children does happen in Barnsley and is always addressed, primarily through schools and through the PREVENT officer. Where Members are aware of any type of exploitation of children, whether online or in the community, they should contact social care. A Member highlighted that the online gambling market equates to £14bn annually and can impact on the whole family. The PREVENT Officer can provide Members with an update in terms of what is being done on internet safety, which has become more of an issue during Covid-19 when children aren't at school. The difficulty is that apps change so quickly and move to different platforms, which leads to difficulty in providing up to date advice. CEOP keep up to date with changes and give very helpful advice on their site and

are the professionals in this field. It was acknowledged that social media in particular is difficult to police and although they may be made aware of the risks, some people will always be prepared to take that risk.

The Independent Chair is confident that all organisations are committed to keeping vulnerable people safe but that does not prevent incidents from taking place. It is not possible to keep every child safe. There may be an incident which cannot be predicted and could happen in a family not engaged in services. Cases are audited which raises issues and learning which is then picked up in training.

The Central Area Council has commissioned the Youth Association to work with young people in the area on a variety of issues. Whilst the Partnership itself is not operational, individual agencies within the partnership may be interested in working together on these types of issues. The audit of cases has included those where a decision has been made not to progress as a safeguarding issue. The audit showed that appropriate decisions are being made.

Although there have been some changes to staffing, many of the staff in the Police and Social Care are the same, which ensures continuity, whilst in other areas (such as the hospital) new people are around to look at things with a fresh pair of eyes and bring about new energy and perspective.

The Children in Care Council have raised an issue around bullying in schools. The Partnership has a strategy and action plan in place which is currently being revised and will be shared with young people at the Partnership/TEG awayday in November. It was highlighted that every school carries out a section 175 self-assessment every year and is provided with a checklist of areas which should be covered. All schools have an anti-bullying policy in place which fits with their own circumstances and plans are in place to ensure that the voices of all children are heard.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note the update and
- (ii) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution

29 Children's Social Care Performance

Members of the Committee were provided with a redacted copy of the children's social care report for the month of July, which contains an overview of the major performance indicators for children's safeguarding and social care, has been provided to place the document in the public domain.

RESOLVED that the summary report be noted

30 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item because of the likely disclosure of exempt

information as defined by Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

31 Children's Social Care Performance

Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, introduced this item and provided Members with the monthly children's social care report, which contained an overview of the major performance indicators for children's safeguarding and social care for Quarter 1 (2019/20); a management performance analysis; a summary of performance, using RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings; the direction of travel for most indicators together with Barnsley's historical performance and comparisons with other local authorities. Areas of performance considered good and areas where improvement is required were also highlighted.

Specific topics discussed included: Early Help Assessments; Social Worker vacancies, caseloads, recruitment and retention; the Mockingbird Programme and the impact of Covid-19. Social Workers in attendance responded to questions about their work and spoke about their experiences during Covid-19. It was highlighted that social workers have continued with their work during lockdown, although home working and other challenges presented themselves which necessitated a flexibility of approach and different ways of working in order to reach out to children and their families.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note the update and
- (ii) Front-line workers be thanked for the work they continue to do in difficult circumstances, particularly throughout the pandemic.

Chair

Item 4a

Report of the Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes
and the Executive Director Core Services, BMBC
to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)
on 13th October 2020

Berneslai Homes Update

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to update the Committee on the recent contract renewal and new strategic plan for Berneslai Homes. It also provides a summary of the impact of Covid 19 on service delivery and reflections of the achievements and challenges during the year. Item 4b (attached) is the new strategic plan and Item 4c (attached) is the annual report to tenants.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Berneslai Homes is the arm's length management organisation (ALMO) managing the Council's 18,400 homes in the Borough. The current contract for management expires on 31st March 2021 and in accordance with the agreement, a 6 months' notice is required for the renewal of the contract. At the Cabinet meeting on 23rd September 2020, in accordance with the renewal arrangements the contract has been extended for a further 10 years until 2031.

3.0 Current Position

New Contract and Strategic Plan

- 3.1 The new contract is supported by a new ten year strategic plan which sets out the key objectives for the next 12-18 months. The priorities for the period to April 2022 are aligned to those emerging from the Council. The longer term priorities will be developed during 2021 and linked to the new Barnsley 2030 vision.
- 3.2 Consultation has been undertaken with tenants, staff, Berneslai Homes Board and representatives from the Council. This includes Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members being invited to comment on the draft strategic plan, following which comments were shared with officers for consideration. Further broader consultation will take place during 2021.
- 3.3 The key priorities for the period to April 2022 will focus on the following areas:
- **Employment and training** – focusing on getting tenants into employment
 - **Zero Carbon** – moving from gas heating to ground and air sources heat pumps, and developing a zero carbon strategy affecting the operations of the organisation and retrofitting existing council homes
 - **Digital Inclusion** – working with the Council to ensure communities have access to affordable broadband and can access services effectively
 - **Tenant Safety** – ensuring we have effective systems to keep tenants safe and meet the requirements in the Building Safety Bill and the Housing Regulator
 - **Growth** – working with the Council on new Council homes and acquiring homes across the Borough
 - **Listening to Tenants** – linking to the outcome of the Social Housing White paper (expected Autumn 2020) and the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman, learning from complaints and improving services

Impact of Covid 19

- 3.4 The organisation responded quickly to the pandemic, reducing service delivery to minimise the spread of the virus but retaining crucial services including emergency repairs, gas servicing, assisting the Council in housing people who were homeless and providing a range of support for tenants. Safe working practices were introduced to keep staff and tenants safe. We have since restarted all services, including the choice-based lettings scheme, repairs and investment work. The repairs backlog has been addressed, though there are delays in the delivery of investment works (kitchen, bathroom replacements etc). Office staff are currently based at home and we are developing an agile working strategy changing how we use the offices in future.
- 3.5 As a result of Covid 19 we have seen increases in anti-social behaviour (ASB), though housing management teams are now back out on the estates and working with partners to resolve these issues. Arrears have been impacted, with collection rates reducing as the number of tenants claiming Universal Credit increases. This has been exacerbated due to a ban on evictions, several cases in arrears pre Covid now have significant arrears. We have also seen an increase in empty homes, though these are now being let minimising the financial impact for the Council on rental income. As we recover from the impact of Covid 19 we are using the lessons learnt to improve working arrangements and the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we provide.
- 3.6 The impact on customers has been significant, our teams are providing support on rent, employment, training, benefits advice and mental health. The impact on employment is being monitored but there have been significant increases in claims for universal credit and loss of employment.

4.0 Future Plans & Challenges

- 4.1 There are several priorities emerging from the Covid 19 situation. The Council's current lettings policy results in the allocation of council homes to those in greatest need. We are also witnessing an increase in the support needs of many of those requesting council homes. We have responded by the introduction of the Tenant First Team, though demand for support cannot be met within current resources. We will be working with the Council to review the existing lettings policy and address how the current policy impacts existing communities and how this addresses the needs of care leavers.
- 4.2 We are reviewing our current structure and developing additional support to assist tenants in sustaining their tenancy and maximising rental and council tax income.
- 4.3 Employment and training is one of the key priorities, we are working with the Council on a scheme to support tenants into work using European Social Fund. The three year scheme will assist 360 tenants into training and employment. In addition, we are using the Government's Kickstart programme to provide twelve month placements for up to 30 young people from within our communities from November 2020 until November 2022. Our overall approach to employment and training includes work placements, apprenticeships, work with schools and graduate trainees.
- 4.4 We are strengthening our governance structure with a new Chair, Sinead Butters and more independent Board members increasing the skills on the Board.

5.0 Invited Witnesses

- 5.1 The following witnesses have been invited to attend today's meeting to answer questions from the committee:

- Amanda Garrard, Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes
- Anthony Brown, Interim Director of Assets, Regeneration & Construction, Berneslai Homes
- Kat Allott-Stevens, Tenants First Service Manager, Berneslai Homes
- Matt Gladstone, Executive Director – Place, BMBC
- Richard Burnham, Head of Housing & Energy, BMBC
- Sarah Cartwright, Group Leader Housing Growth, BMBC
- Tom Smith, Head of Employment & Skills, BMBC
- Cllr Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson – Place – Regeneration & Culture, BMBC

6.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

6.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- What have been the biggest challenges in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic?
- What is being done to ensure appropriate support is available to the increasing number of households who are vulnerable and have support needs?
- Further to concerns raised by OSC Members to the Council's Cabinet in November 2019 regarding the standards of properties being let, what improvements have been made and what evidence do you have of this?
- What area of work/performance is Berneslai Homes most proud of over the last 12 months and what positive impact has this had for local residents?
- What is in place to ensure you have robust tenant engagement practices and what evidence do you have of tenant involvement directly influencing service delivery?
- As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, what do you foresee as the biggest challenges in the coming 12 months for tenants as well as Berneslai Homes as an organisation?
- What is in place to support staff both in terms of their wellbeing as well as enabling them to achieve their potential and offer them development opportunities?
- How effective is partnership working amongst Berneslai Homes and other local agencies in tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and in what ways could this be improved?
- What actions are being taken by Berneslai Homes to minimise the organisation's carbon footprint and contribute positively to the Council's Zero 40 and Zero 45 targets?
- How will Berneslai Homes contribute to the employment, education and skills agenda over the coming 12 months and beyond, in delivering a jobs-led recovery as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic?
- In relation to the Social Housing White Paper due in Autumn 2020, what do you anticipate will be the impact on Berneslai Homes as an organisation as well as tenants?
- What actions could be taken by Members to support the work of Berneslai Homes?

7.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

- Item 4b (attached) – Berneslai Homes Strategic Plan 2021-31 “Roots in the past, eyes on the future”

- Item 4c (attached) – Berneslai Homes Annual Report to Tenants 2019-20
- OSC Report to Cabinet Regarding Void Property Standards (Cab.27.11.2019/6):
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s59906/Recommendations%20to%20Cabinet%20further%20to%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>
- Response Report to the OSC's Recommendations Regarding Void Property Standards (Cab.22.01.2020/6):
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s62025/Response%20to%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Recommendations%20regarding%20Void%20Properties.pdf>

8.0 Glossary

ALMO	Arm's Length Management Organisation
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9.0 Officer Contact

Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officer scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk
 5th October 2020



Roots in the past, eyes on the future.

Strategic Plan 2021-31



2030

Working with
Barnsley Council on the
Barnsley 2030 Vision.

Foreword by the Chair and Chief Executive

Welcome to our Strategic Plan which sets out what Berneslai Homes aims to achieve over the next 10 years for our customers, our colleagues and the communities in which we work.

It explains who we are, what we do and outlines the opportunities and challenges that we face. This is the first year of a new 10 year plan set in a period of change and a world shaken by the Covid 19 pandemic.

This plan acknowledges the difference Covid 19 has made to the way we work, how we deliver services and the importance of ensuring that the safety of tenants and staff is our top priority. In recognition of this impact the focus for the plan is for the period up to April 2022. Further consultation will take place during 2021 to align with the Barnsley 2030 vision and work with our customers, communities and staff to develop the full 10 year vision.

During the next 12 months we will focus on recovering from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, supporting tenants and communities and building on the positives that are emerging from the crisis. Our resilience, flexibility and commitment have all been challenged during 2020 but we are determined to emerge a better and stronger organisation focussing on what really matters to our customers and communities. The economic impact of the pandemic is still unfolding but the opportunity to deliver a jobs led recovery is one in which we are well placed to respond.

We will embrace our role as an anchor institution in Barnsley, working with the Council and partners to develop a clear vision and ambition for Barnsley 2030. As this vision is developed we will align our services and ensure we have a pivotal role in meeting the challenges and opportunities the new vision will bring.

We continue to strengthen how we govern the organisation, refreshing the Board and appointing a new Chair during 2020 as part of the new chapter in Berneslai Homes' story.

The relationship we have with tenants and residents remains one of our strengths and we acknowledge the importance the new tenant engagement structure has in working alongside us to maintain our excellent service offer.

As the post Covid 19 world emerges we remain well placed within Barnsley and the region to influence policy, make the most of devolution and seize the opportunities that arise to build on the strengths of Berneslai Homes – an exciting time indeed to start our next chapter.

We look forward to working with our partners developing a new strategic vision during 2021, for the next ten years.



A. J. Garrard
Amanda Garrard
Chief Executive Officer



G. Ellis
Gary Ellis
Interim Chair
of the Board

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Executive Summary

Berneslai Homes was established in December 2002 and is the Council's Local Housing Company for the management and maintenance of council housing in Barnsley.

The services we provide include the delivery of a high quality service to tenants - letting homes, collecting rents, repairing and investing in homes. But we provide much more than this, putting customers at the heart, our vision is to create great homes and communities for the people of Barnsley.

To do this we are more than a landlord, we provide a broad range of services that allows us to achieve our vision. We will continue to deliver excellent services to tenants but we will do much more than that, enhancing tenant engagement, providing tenancy support to sustain people in their homes, tackling fuel poverty, addressing the carbon agenda and creating real opportunities as a major employer in Barnsley. We will utilise regional, national and European funding to support employment initiatives for our customers and communities.

Underpinning our aspirations are some clear objectives for the period up to 2022 as we recover and reset as part of the Covid 19 pandemic. Our objectives include:

- Creating employment and training opportunities for tenants and their families.
- Developing and implementing our approach to the zero carbon agenda, retrofitting our homes, developing employment opportunities and reducing fuel poverty.
- Seizing opportunities to grow as an organisation and sustain levels of social housing in Barnsley.
- Working with tenants to embrace the outcomes of the Social Housing White paper (Autumn 2020) and the Hackitt Review on Fire Safety.
- Work with the Council to develop digital inclusion throughout the Borough.

We will continue to work with the Council and partners to develop the Barnsley 2030 vision and align our objectives to deliver the vision.



Barneslai Homes recognises its key role in the delivery of the emerging Barnsley 2030 vision and our contribution includes;

- Making the best use of and maintaining the existing housing stock.
- Providing early targeted support for households and families facing multiple problems.
- Allocating social housing fairly and to those in most housing need.
- Working with the Council to provide a co-ordinated response to homelessness and eradicating rough sleeping in the Borough.
- Investing in renewable energy and meeting the challenges of the carbon zero agenda, using retrofit as an opportunity for a jobs led economic recovery.
- Providing choice and options to help vulnerable and older people live independently in their own homes.
- Providing a managing and lettings agent service to private rented landlords.
- Community involvement and engagement to support strong and resilient communities.
- Increasing employment opportunities and support as a major employer, signed up to the Apprenticeship Pledge, Local Spend targets and Employer's Promise and using ESF funding to support people into employment.
- Providing financial inclusion and digital inclusion support for people to maintain their tenancies and access employment.
- Making links between housing and health to mitigate or prevent escalating health and social care costs.

About Us

Berneslai Homes is a company limited by guarantee and is overseen by a Board of Directors who meet six times a year.

Underpinning the Board and Committee formal governance structure is our co-regulatory tenant involvement and engagement model, to ensure our customers are fully involved in developing, shaping and scrutinising our services.

Our service standards are developed with our tenants and regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

The implementation of policies and the day to day running of Berneslai Homes is delegated to the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team. The executive are held to account by the Board against annual Service Improvement Plans. Overall performance is reported to the Council on a quarterly basis against headline priorities and asks of the shareholder. We have strong and robust governance which is audited on an annual basis.



Our Vision is
Creating great homes and communities for the people of Barnsley



Our Values are
Great Place, Great People, Great Company

Our Values

To deliver our vision we have dedicated and committed staff who care about the services we provide and ensure we deliver excellent services.

Our values underpin all that we do.

Great Place - We are a local housing company, rooted in Barnsley and working in collaboration to deliver excellent customer focused services.

Great People - We are an organisation with a can do, positive culture that is outward facing, learning from others and using this to improve peoples lives.

Great Company - We are agile and responsive, able to react quickly making the most of any opportunities to improve and grow.



Our Opportunities and Challenges

The External World – The initial stage of the new strategic plan is set within the context of the impact of Covid 19. The full implications for individuals, communities and the economy are not yet fully understood, however there are real challenges and opportunities to review how we respond and consider what and how we deliver.

Beyond the Covid 19 response, the themes of zero carbon, economic recovery, the outcomes of the Social Housing White Paper and the digital agenda, all remain and are the backdrop to the 10 year strategy.

Financial Landscape – The company operates a zero based approach to establishing its management fee and year on year continues to contain budgetary pressures and deliver savings to the Housing Revenue Account, managed by BMBC. Value for money is at the forefront of all decisions and the efficiency register captures annual efficiencies.

Since its establishment in 2002 the company has accrued a surplus due to efficiencies and successful delivery of the repairs and maintenance contract. This surplus is reinvested in the modernisation of the company, housing growth and fuel poverty projects to support the economic development and well-being of Barnsley.

Policy Landscape – In August 2018 the Government published a consultation paper entitled 'A New Deal for Social Housing'. The white paper is expected in Autumn 2020. The principles are likely to remain unchanged, ensuring homes are safe and decent, ensuring swift and effective resolution of disputes, empowering residents and making sure their voices are heard, tackling stigma and boosting the supply of social housing and supporting home ownership. New key performance indicators will emerge and will need to be reflected in future targets. The accountability and transparency to customers will be central and the new Housing Ombudsman's "Complaints Handling Code" effective from September 2020 requires joint work with tenants to self assess our performance in relation to complaints and ensure we learn and improve.

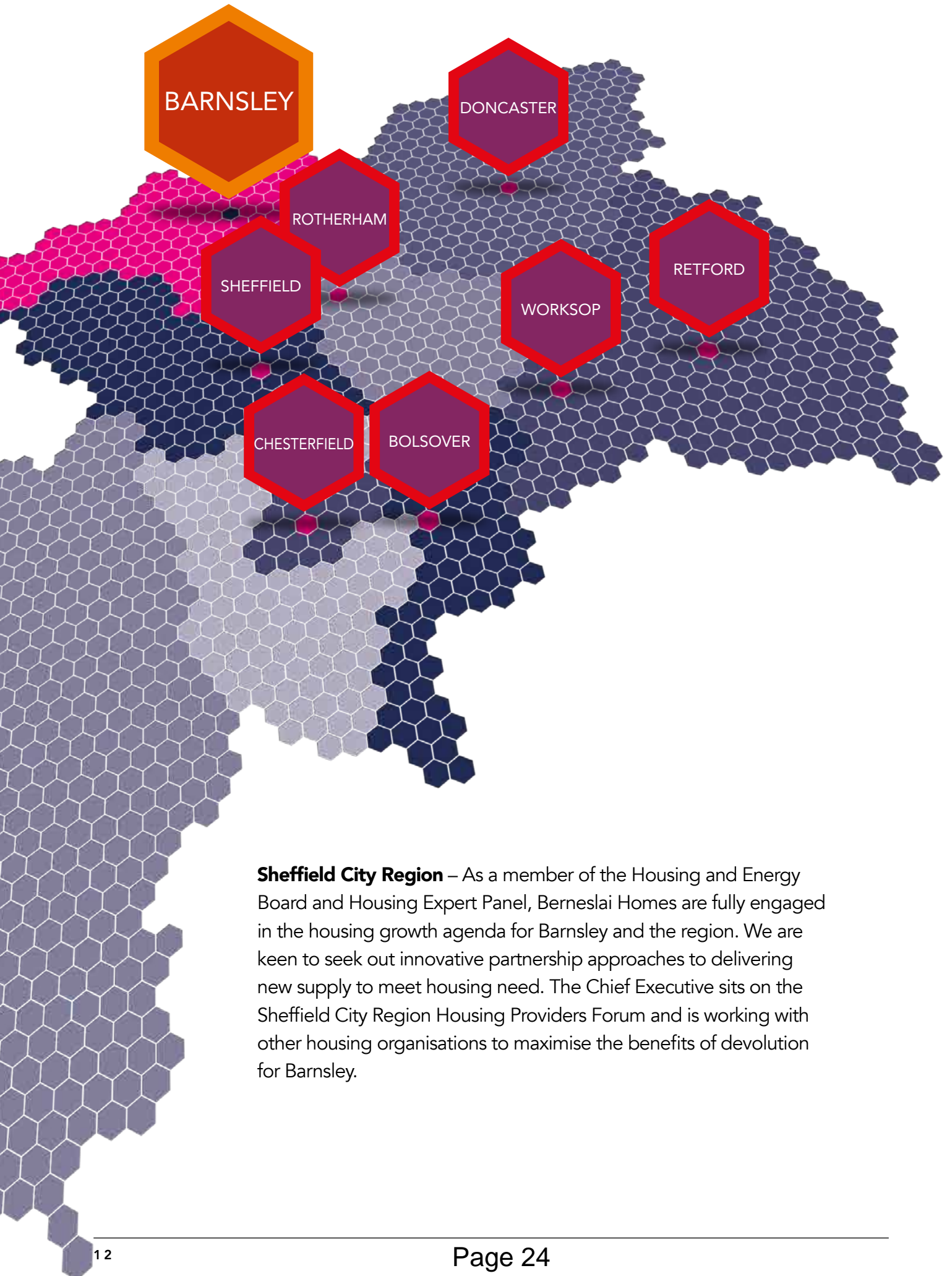
The safety of tenants and staff remains our number one priority. Significant work completed in 2020 has strengthened compliance and as the Hackitt Review concludes we will ensure we implement the recommendations in the 'Building a Safer Future Report'.

Demographics – Our current customer profile shows that 59% of customers have a disability and over 32% are aged 66 years and above. All indications are that people are living longer with increasing support needs but with the desire to remain independent in their own home.

The number of households who are vulnerable with dependency and support needs is growing. Health inequalities continue to be a challenge with many communities in Barnsley being ranked in areas of deprivation. A large number of our customers have increasingly complex lifestyles and our focus continues to be on early help and prevention within the community. Levels of employment amongst our customer base require coordinated actions with partners to support customers into work.

Tenants Voice – As a local council housing company we listen to our tenants and talk to our Council and we do more than just manage homes.

– we help develop communities and support the needs of tenants. We believe that tenant engagement is essential in shaping and improving services as well as building trust and communication with our customers. Our customers continue to tell us that the repairs and maintenance service is the main determinant of satisfaction with the company and we will take this into account in ensuring the Council's assets are protected within our service offer. Customer expectations are changing with more people wanting to use the website and social media to contact us, and our focus continues to be ensuring a balance between self-serve on-line and personal face to face dependent on the service required. We will continue to work with tenants to understand the best way to deliver services and meet their needs.



Sheffield City Region – As a member of the Housing and Energy Board and Housing Expert Panel, Berneslai Homes are fully engaged in the housing growth agenda for Barnsley and the region. We are keen to seek out innovative partnership approaches to delivering new supply to meet housing need. The Chief Executive sits on the Sheffield City Region Housing Providers Forum and is working with other housing organisations to maximise the benefits of devolution for Barnsley.

Our Service Offer

Although the strategic plan is until 2031, we have focussed our offer on the period to April 2022. We will work during 2021 to develop a longer term vision linked to the Barnsley 2030 emerging vision. Following consultation with our customers and shareholder we have developed four priorities to assist us in delivering our vision:

- ◆ Excellent Customer Services
- ◆ Sustainable Communities
- ◆ Partnership Working
- ◆ Successful Well Managed Company

Excellent Customer Services

What will we deliver in the period to April 2022?

- We will review with customers how we deliver services and embrace the learning from the Covid 19 experience.
- We will make best use of the council's social housing assets and introduce a new asset management strategy.
- We will maintain all homes to the Barnsley Homes Standard.
- We will introduce new policies on compliance to keep tenants safe.
- We will improve the IT systems and enhance cyber security.
- We will introduce new technology into the contact centre, enhancing the customer experience and improving value for money.
- We will use technology to improve how we deliver our repairs service making it more efficient and easier for tenants.
- We will have an "Access to Services" strategy promoting self-service and value for money including a range of digital services for customers.
- We will provide support for tenants on their digital journey including piloting new initiatives including use of tablets to access services.
- We will provide a tenancy support service that helps tenants pay their rent and sustain their tenancies.
- We will signpost support to help tenants in fuel and food poverty.
- We will have robust tenant engagement practices to help communities be resilient and shape local services.
- We will work with TPAS to review the effectiveness of our approach to engagement.

How will we measure our results?

- We will strive to maintain our overall satisfaction levels.
- We will deliver an annual Barnsley Homes Standard programme.
- We will ensure core business processes and outcomes are at or above industry standard.
- We will ask customers if they would recommend Berneslai Homes as a provider of choice to family and friends.
- We will ask customers if they believe we treat them fairly and with respect.



Sustainable Communities

What will we deliver in the period to April 2022?

- We will work with the Council to increase Council Housing in the Borough.
- We will identify and support vulnerable people to live independently.
- We will commit to 'Harry's Pledge' to make a real difference in the support provided to carers.
- We will review the housing offer to Care Leavers.
- We will provide an enhanced service offer supporting tenants further towards employment.
- We will deliver skills workshops for tenants providing training on a range of topics including repairs and IT.
- We will develop a pre-tenancy support / housing coach model to improve tenancy sustainment.
- We will review how we identify and support those tenants that need to continue to shield from Covid 19 now and in any potential future waves.
- We will support communities to be strong and resilient and work on solutions for those affected by floods.
- We will develop a zero carbon strategy for Berneslai Homes.
- We will extend the Solar PV scheme to more homes.
- We will continue to move towards sustainable energy sources.
- We will encourage active travel to reduce car usage amongst staff.

How will we measure our results?

- We will be a key partner of choice in strategic housing growth programmes.
- We will increase the number of properties with sustainable energy technology.
- We will have a manageable level of tenancy turnover.
- We will find out whether customers believe people from different communities get on well together.



Partnership Working

What will we deliver in the period to April 2022?

- We will be strategically aligned to BMBC's housing strategy, regeneration and growth priorities.
- We will be a key partner in developing and delivering the Barnsley 2030 vision.
- We will work with Partners to improve the digital infrastructure and accessibility for our tenants and communities.
- We will maintain our reputation at a regional and national level.
- We will work with a range of national and regional organisations to learn and adopt best practice from within and outside the sector.
- We will have a strong and sustainable tenant engagement and involvement framework.
- We will work with partners at a local and regional level to seek shared value for money solutions.
- We will work with partners to assist in tackling anti-social behaviour and community tensions.
- We will continue to be engaged with the third sector.

How will we measure our results?

- We will be a key partner of choice in strategic housing growth programmes.
- We will contribute to Future Council outcomes.
- We will be partner of choice within partnership frameworks.
- We will contribute to the national policy debate through recognised trade bodies.
- We will increase uptake of volunteering by the community and staff.



Successful Well Managed Company

What will we deliver in the period to April 2022?

- We will review how we use offices and create a working culture that maximises productivity and the wellbeing of staff.
- We will maintain our focus on delivering high performance services whilst providing excellent value for money.
- We will introduce new governance arrangements with refreshed membership and enhanced skills.
- We will invest in communities to the best of our abilities.
- We will focus on generating efficiencies to support economic development and affordable housing growth in Barnsley.
- We will be an employer of choice.
- We will retain a skilled and flexible workforce which is responsive to change.
- We will provide management development schemes for staff to allow them to achieve their potential.
- We will establish the carbon footprint of Berneslai Homes and set ambitious targets for its reduction aligned to the Council's Zero 40 and Zero 45 net carbon zero targets.
- We will ensure that our working methods are modern and make the best use of technology.
- We will have a profitable in house Construction Services trading arm employing a skilled and safe workforce.

How will we measure our results?

- We will maintain staff satisfaction levels.
- We will spend at least 70% of our funds locally supporting the Barnsley economy.
- We will have an in house Construction Services trading arm which is profitable and has a first class safety record.
- We will have technology that enables our front line employees to work effectively.
- We will employ as a minimum 3% of our workforce as apprentices.
- We will maintain our company wide Health and Safety audit ratings.
- We will meet our equality and diversity commitments reducing the gender pay gap and increasing the diversity of our staff.



Appendices

1. Strategic Alignment
2. Key Performance Indicator Data set 2020/21
3. Financial Statement
4. Board and Committee Structure
5. SMT Structure

1. Strategic Alignment



We will work with the Council to ensure that our priorities outlined in our service offer are aligned, building on the Covid 19 reset themes currently in place relating to :

- Health and Wellbeing
- Business and Economy
- Building Resilience
- Education and Skills
- Infrastructure and Environment

During 2020/21 we will play a key role as an anchor organisation developing and delivering the Barnsley 2030 vision. As the priorities emerge we will highlight how our priorities and work relates to making the vision a reality for Barnsley.

Health & Wellbeing	Business & Economy	Building Resilience	Education & Skills	Infrastructure & Environment
<p>Great Place to Work</p> <p>Improving Mental Health Part of the BMBC Mental Health Partnership.</p> <p>Active Travel - Staff cycling and walking to work.</p> <p>Wellbeing of Tenants - Increased investment in aids and adaptations.</p> <p>Homelessness - Work with the Council to reduce homelessness.</p>	<p>Excellent Governance</p> <p>Service Delivery Review of delivery methods to increase capacity and productivity.</p> <p>Repairs online and dynamic scheduling.</p> <p>Tenants at the Heart of Decision Making</p> <p>Great Performance</p>	<p>Supporting Communities</p> <p>Support for tenants into employment and housing coaches . Support for carers - Harrys Pledge.</p> <p>Support for care leavers.</p> <p>Accessible Services</p> <p>Flood defence work - Burton Grange.</p>	<p>Employment & Training</p> <p>Employment projects expanded - Community Refurbishment scheme, ESF, Kickstart - Jobs led recovery.</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Expansion of free/low cost broadband (with BMBC).</p>	<p>Zero Carbon 2040</p> <p>Zero carbon strategy with solar PV programme and Heating system replacement - moves away from gas.</p> <p>Safe Homes</p> <p>Growth Social housing growth with BMBC.</p>

2. Key Performance Indicator Data set 2020/21

Ref.	Description	Outturn 2018/19	Target 2019/20	Actual 2019/20 Q3	Target 2020/21
BH1	The percentage of all tenants satisfied with the overall service provided.	89%	+/- 3%	89%	89% +/- 3%
BH2	Thinking about the building you live in how satisfied are you that your landlord provides a home that is safe and secure.	---			86% +/- 3%
BH3	Number of complaints received (cumulative).	118	+/- 20%	91	118 +/- 20%
BH4	The percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service.	89%	+/- 3%	87%	89% +/- 3%
BH5	The proportion of local authority dwellings which are non decent dwellings at the start of the financial year.	3.98%	4%	Measured at year end	4%
BH6	Priority 1 Repairs– 24 hours percentage completed on time.	99.85%	99.50%	99.40%	99.50%
BH7	Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency reactive repairs (new PRIP KPI 11).				9 days
BH8	Percentage of appointments kept (new PRIP KPI 1).				99.10%
BH9	Average time to re-let local authority housing (calendar days).	20.28	23	22.26	23
BH10	Rent collected by the local authority as a proportion of rents owed on HRA dwellings.	97.85%	96%	97.75%	96%
BH11	We will employ as a minimum 3% of our workforce as apprentices.	4.21%	3%	3.95%	3%
BH12	We will spend at least 50% of our funds locally supporting the Barnsley economy (cumulative).	78.63%	70%	75.61%	70%

3. Financial Statement

Berneslai Homes Management Fee £12.225m

Housing Revenue Account funded services which Berneslai Homes performance manage

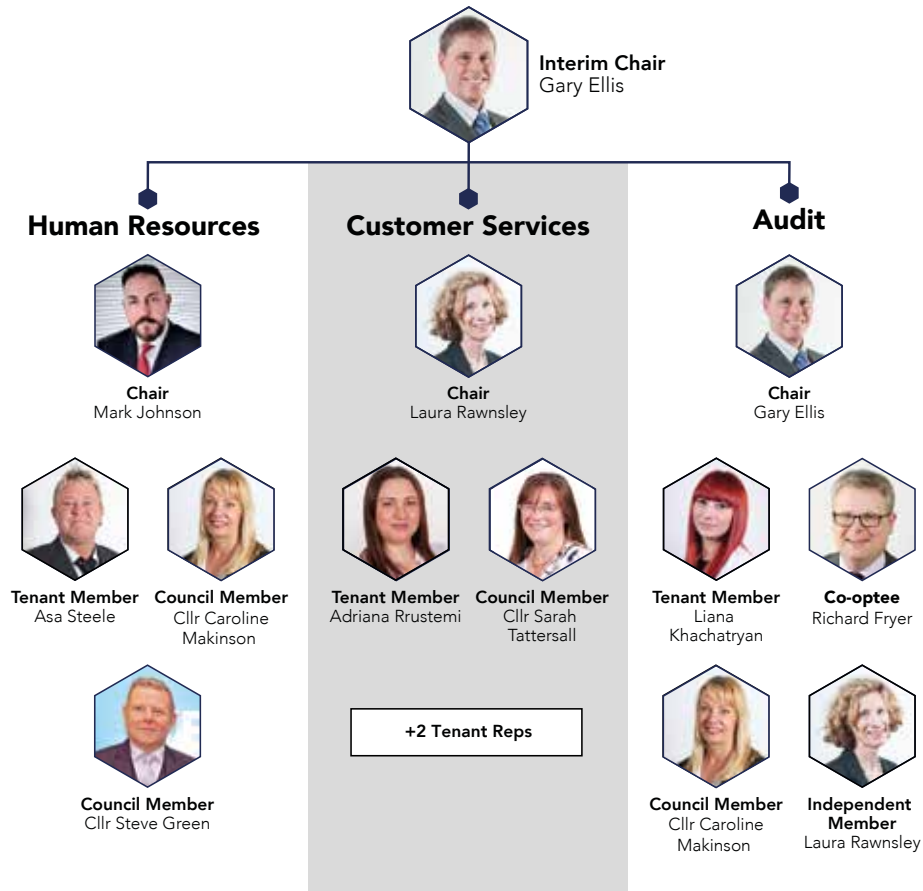
Grounds Maintenance	£1.43m
Barnsley Connects	£0.83m
Repairs and Maintenance	£19.171m

Housing Capital Investment Programme elements which Berneslai Homes performance manage

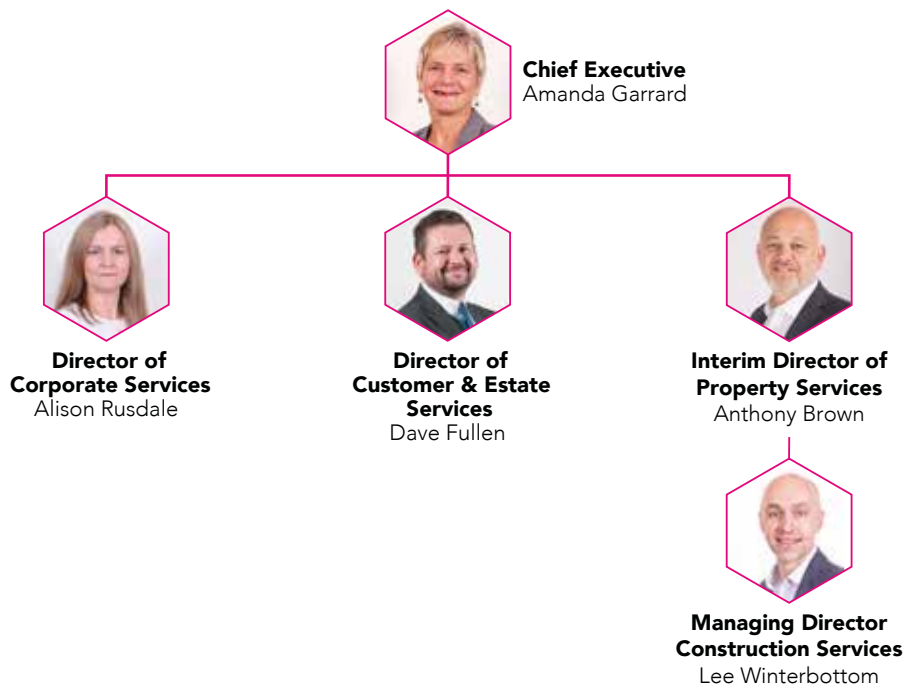
Core Programme	£21.65m
Acquisitions	£4.45m over 3 years

Berneslai Homes surplus contribution to Housing Growth £8.9m

4. Board and Committee Structure



5. SMT Structure





www.berneslaihomes.co.uk



Berneslai Homes Limited is a company controlled by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. A company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, number 4548803.

Registered office: 10th floor, Gateway Plaza, Off Sackville Street, BARNSELY, South Yorkshire S70 2RD.

August 2020

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**YOUR
VOICE**

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Introducing our new Chief Executive

I've been Chief Executive since September last year. My mantra is 'roots in the past, eyes on the future', so my promise is to never let go of the many years of fantastic service Berneslai Homes has delivered to tenants, but to make sure that we look to the future, support the Barnsley 2030 vision, and evolve and adapt to continue delivering for Barnsley in this ever changing environment.

Our priorities over the coming few years are:

- get the basics right and deliver excellent customer services;
- support the Barnsley 2030 vision;
- increase numbers of council homes;
- modernise our IT systems;
- zero carbon – homes and offices;
- employment and training for tenants; and
- focus on the how as well as the what!

This annual report celebrates our excellent performance at a very challenging time. I hope that you find it informative.

A. J. Garrard

Amanda Garrard
Chief Executive Officer



Roots in the past,
eyes on the future.

Introducing the Tenant Voice

We're the Tenant Voice Panel and we're ten tenants who came together in November 2019 to work with Berneslai Homes and improve services by giving a tenant view and challenge.

We meet regularly to consider Berneslai Homes performance and service delivery and while it's still early days for us, and we're still developing our skills and knowledge, we think we're already making a difference.

Our 9 tenant friends in the Tenant Voice Scrutiny Panel started work in January 2020. Their job is to look deeper into how Berneslai Homes deliver services. You can find out more about us on page 15.

One of our first jobs has been to help Berneslai Homes produce this annual report, by asking questions which we think matter most to tenants.

We hope you enjoy reading it and if you've got any questions you want us to ask on your behalf, just e-mail tenantvoice@berneslaihomes.co.uk.

”

We play a vital role in helping Berneslai Homes to improve their services.



GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT



On target



Area of concern

How we spend your money

Looking at the finances

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How do you spend the money that we pay you in rent?

Chris Storey, Tenant Voice.

Berneslai Homes reply:

Every penny that we collect and every penny that we spend on services counts. Barnsley Council spent **£77.1 million** on council housing in 2019/20 and here's how the money was spent.

* The 'Barnsley Pound' means the money that stays in the borough by spending it on local supplies and services, and by paying wages to employees who live locally.



We collected **97.48%** of all rent due.



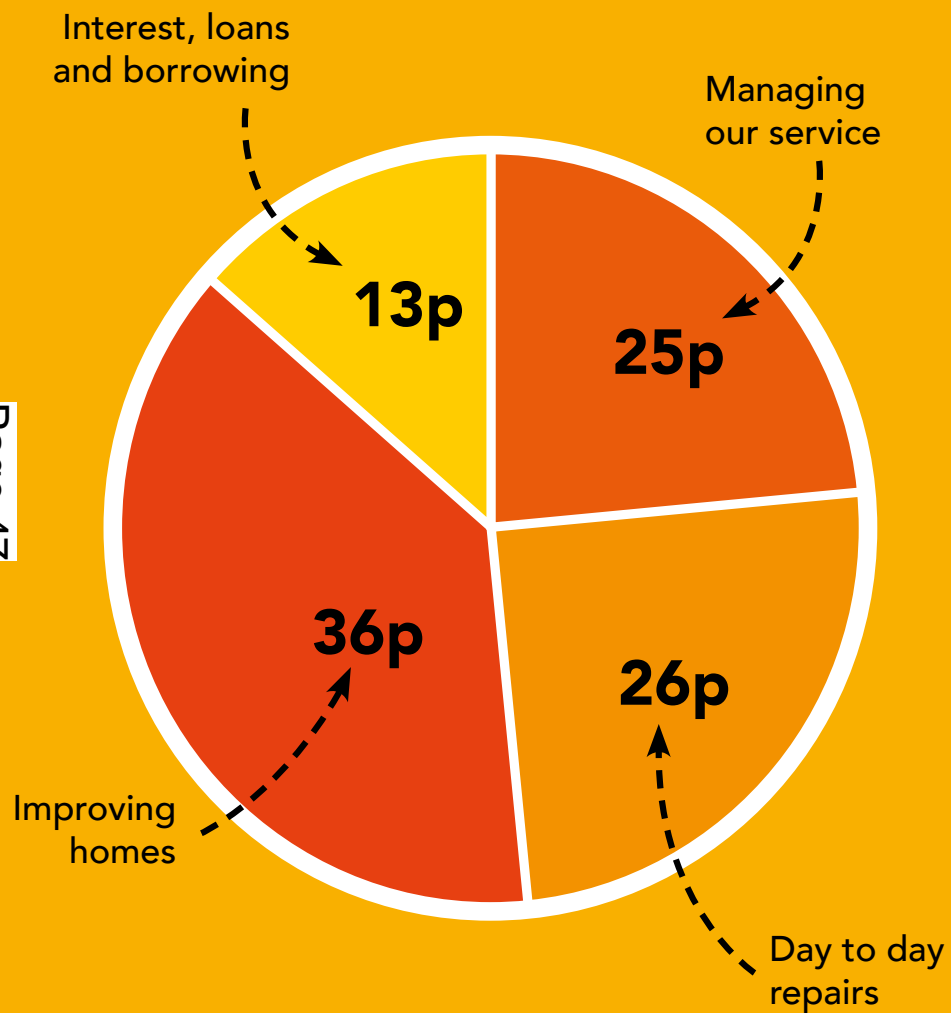
We made **£516,540** of efficiency savings that we can invest back into services.



Kept the 'Barnsley Pound'* , in Barnsley, spending **74.29%** of funds locally, great for supporting the local economy.

Expenditure by every £1 of income

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How we spend our management fee

Barnsley Council paid us **£11.8 million** to run services in 2019/20 and here is how we spent the money on average per household.

Managing repairs and improvements*	£164
Tenancy management	£75
Rent arrears and collection	£89
Supported housing and supporting people	£49
Estate services**	£10
Lettings	£49
Resident involvement	£37
Anti-social behaviour***	£15
Development	£11
Leasehold	£7
Other	£136

* Does not include the cost of repairs or improvements, as this comes direct from the council.

** The spend on Estate Services has fallen from previous years as the Grounds Maintenance Budget is now part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

*** Does not include the £662k contribution from the HRA to the council's ASB function.

Hitting our targets

Key Performance Indicators



How can we tell that Berneslai Homes are performing well?

Linda Cullumbine, Tenant Voice.

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Barneslai Homes reply:

The **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** seen in the table right, are the targets set by Barnsley Council to measure our overall success. They include a range of business performance measures (like collecting rent) and tenant satisfaction.

This year we have met or exceeded most of our KPIs with the exception of three, which we narrowly missed. Here's an explanation of why we missed them and how we're improving performance:

Non decent dwellings: We couldn't finish work on all the homes in the programme because of Covid 19. We're now back on track.

Non urgent repairs: The lockdown in March meant we couldn't complete all non urgent repairs in target. We're now back on track.

Average relet time: 62 lower demand homes which were empty for more than 10 weeks. A few were empty longer than normal because we needed to adapt them for the new tenant.

Description	2018/19	2019/20
Overall satisfaction	89%	89%
Satisfaction with neighbourhood	86%	83%
Complaints	118	128
Satisfaction with repairs	89%	87%
Non-decent dwellings	3.98%	4.07%
Priority 1 repairs in 24 hours	99.85%	99.93%
Non-urgent repairs	8.68 days	9.12 days
Responsive repair appointments kept by us	99.49%	99.35%
Average re-let time	20.28 days	23.84 days
Rent collected	97.85%	97.48%
Percentage of workforce as apprentices	4.12%	3.62%
Funds spent locally	78.63%	74.29%

■ Meeting or exceeding target
 ■ Narrowly missed target
 ■ Below target

We also compare ourselves to other landlords. This is called benchmarking, it helps us to look outside our own organisation and learn from others. The benchmarking report for 2019/20 will be available in November, on our website and social media.

Looking after your home

Repairs, maintenance and investment

The repairs and maintenance service is the most important service to tenants, so it's great that we performed so well again last year, with high satisfaction, quick response times and getting it right first time.

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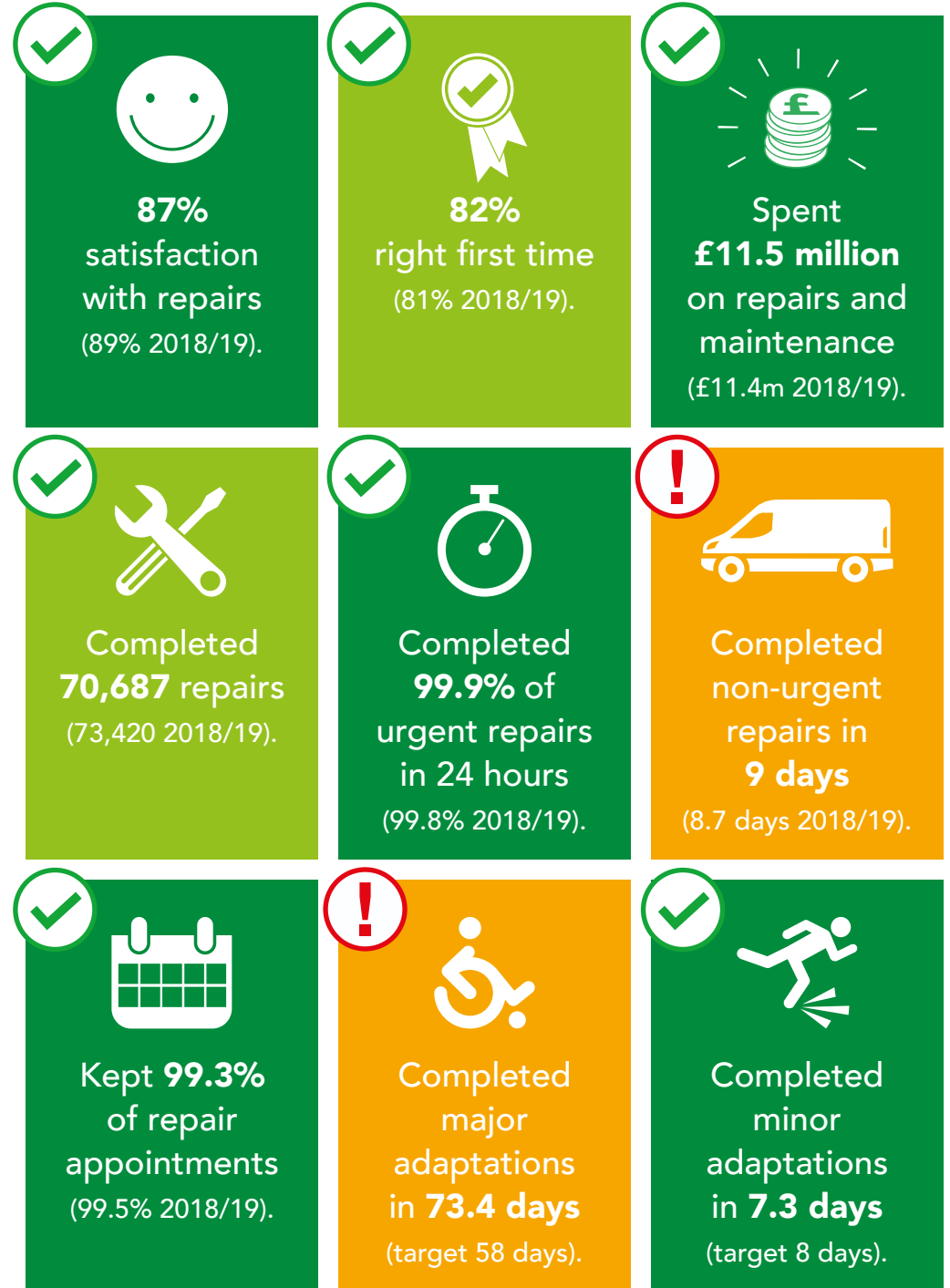
Why are you missing your target for major adaptations and how will you improve this?

Ann Skelton, Tenant Voice.

Berneslai Homes reply:

We've seen a year on year increase in the number of tenants asking for major adaptations, and this has affected how quickly our partners SWFYT can complete the assessment. Last year we completed **886** major adaptations compared to **807** in 18/19.

To try and get assessments completed faster, we've recently increased how much we pay for the service, so that SWYFT can employ some more staff, but the continued rise in demand and the impact of Covid 19 may mean that it's some time before we can improve our performance. We'll keep a watchful eye on this.



Our tenants' safety

Keeping you safe in your homes



So what are you doing differently to give me assurance that you're keeping all your tenants safe?

Jane Faulkner, Tenant Voice.

Page 50 Berneslai Homes reply:

We take our tenants' safety very seriously, and since the tragedy at Grenfell we, like all other landlords, have reviewed our approach to safety. We're confident that, with the recent changes we've made, we're doing all we can to keep you safe.

Last year we appointed an independent specialist to assess how well we were complying with our legal duties including:

- gas servicing and maintenance;
- asbestos monitoring and management;
- fire safety and risk assessment;
- water hygiene monitoring and management*; and
- electrical safety and periodic inspection*.

They told us we were doing well, but we needed to have better monitoring and assurance arrangements in place to keep a close eye on safety and to make sure we followed up on repairs needed to address safety concerns.



Completed **100%** fire safety checks and remedial works in the **164** buildings needing them.



Completed water hygiene tests in **100%** of the **54** non domestic buildings needing them.



98% of homes have an up to date asbestos survey.



Completed **99.7%** gas servicing on time.

As a result we've developed better compliance monitoring covering all aspects of tenant safety. Over the coming year, we'll be;

- raising awareness of fire safety with tenants living in flats with shared entrances;
- our new 10 year electrical check programme on homes;
- continuing with our newly commenced three yearly water hygiene check **in all homes** not just non domestic; and
- introducing new measures to take action against those tenants who don't let us in to do their gas servicing.

If you have any concerns at all about a health and safety issue contact our 24/7 repairs hotline 01226 787878.

* In non domestic buildings.

Our tenants' safety

The Coronavirus outbreak



What did you do during the Coronavirus pandemic to keep services running?

Peter Begent, Tenant Voice.

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Berneslai Homes reply:

The coronavirus lockdown was a challenge for all of us. For Berneslai Homes it was important that we continued to deliver our vital services, but also ensured the safety of our tenants and our staff.

A number of our services needed to be adapted, or suspended to meet demand for our core services. While many of our staff worked through the pandemic, others were furloughed for a period and some were seconded to the council to help deliver vital services there too.

We are very proud of our staff's response, here is a brief overview of how we rose to the challenge.



Carole Roby

Rents Manager

We adapted our services during the coronavirus outbreak to help tenants to manage their finances and pay their rent by providing benefit advice, making referrals for support, agreeing reduced payment plans and suspending arrears actions.



Paul Nelmes

Operations Manager

We managed to maintain key areas of service delivery where safe to do so, such as gas servicing, emergency repairs, void property work and some external works and new build. We kept our tenants and staff safe by adopting our own 'Safe Working Practises'. Thirteen of our operatives volunteered to join the council's Waste Collection Teams.



Darren Asquith

Housing Management Group Manager (West)

Our teams contacted vulnerable tenants to check if they needed support and where necessary arranged food parcel drop-offs, referrals to support agencies, carried out daily fire risk assessments, rearranged gas servicing appointments and arranged support from Mental Health workers for distressed tenants.



Kat Allott-Stevens

Tenants First Service Manager

Our Tenant Support Officers and Mental Health Support Workers were out safely visiting families with complex needs, ensuring our safeguarding responsibilities are met and support provided where it is most needed. We helped tenants gain extra benefits and halt court possession proceedings.



Gillian Totty

Community Engagement Officer

We've had to suspend our public meetings, but have been working on helping TARAs and community networks to become more 'e-enabled' and developed a social media presence for our Housing Management Teams. We are also helping to prepare our community buildings for re-opening and have taken over empty property checks.



Sarah Hopwood

Marketing and Communications Officer

We've regularly updated tenants, staff and partners via our website and social media, to keep them informed of what areas of service were operating and what had been suspended. This also included a regularly updated list of frequently asked questions.



Jill Barker

Community Buildings Manager

Although we had to cancel social activities, our Scheme Managers still attended sites using social distancing and contact protocols. Our standalone community centres were closed. Laundries, including the ones accessed via a community centre remained open as usual but guidance notes regarding social distancing and extra hand sanitiser and handwash were prominent. All of our 'under one roof' Independent Living sites were equipped with hand sanitiser and handwash.



Amanda Bennett

Head of HR & Organisational Development

Our work with partners didn't stop during the lockdown. We continued to work with Goldthorpe Foodbank, IDAS and sharing important messages from Barnsley Council. We also support Centrepont, our chosen charity for this year, who are expecting to lose £2m in support due to the effects of coronavirus.

Listening to you

Giving great customer service



What is your promise about customer services and do you think you could do better?

Jane Robinson, Tenant Voice.

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Berneslai Homes reply:

Our promise for great customer service is simple:

You can contact us easily and in a way that suits you.

- We'll answer your enquiries quickly and fully.
- You'll be happy with the service we give.
- When things go wrong, we'll put things right and we'll learn (see page 14 for more information).

We measure how well we deliver customer service by checking performance information, and asking tenant opinion in surveys and other ways (see page 16). Even though we get some good feedback, we're developing a better online service as an increasing number of tenants are online (about 70%) and we're reviewing our telephone service to make sure we respond to demand.

Each year we ask a random sample of 2,500 tenants a range of questions about our services. This is called the STAR survey and in 2019 873 people gave us feedback.



88% of tenants are happy with how we deal with their enquiry (STAR).



Answered **63%** of **175,976** calls in **20 seconds**. The average wait time was **80 seconds** (70% 2018/19).



68% of tenants found it easy to contact us.



78% of tenants say staff are helpful.



35% increase in repairs reported on our APP and **52%** increase in website visitors (**19,514** e-forms completed).



We received **1000 compliments** 148 more than last year.

Listening to you

Responding when things go wrong



There's a drive to ensure that landlords make it easy for tenants to complain, answer concerns and learn from mistakes. How do you deal with complaints?

Lisa Beevers, Tenant Voice.

Page 54 Berneslai Homes reply:

You can complain over the phone, online, e-mail, letter or just talking to our staff and our aim is to resolve matters there and then. But if we can't do that or it's a bigger issue we have a 2 stage formal process. Stage 1 is where the service tries to sort things out and Stage 2 is where our Customer Services Team complete an investigation on behalf of a Service Director. If you are still not happy, you can then ask the Housing Ombudsman to get involved.

We've reviewed how we deal with complaints with a focus on first time resolution and learning from complaints. So over the coming year we're confident we'll resolve more first time as we'll be:

- training staff in complaint handling;
- agreeing a compensation framework; and
- assessing our complaint service against the new standards published by the Housing Ombudsman.



776 informal complaints.



We agreed with **73** of the **130** Stage 1 complains and **14** of the **25** stage 2 complaints.



6 Housing Ombudsman enquiries.



We identified **104** service improvements from complaints.



It took an average of **8.5** working days to respond to complaints.



67% of people were happy with our complaint handling.

You can see a summary of complaints on our website.

Listening to you

The Tenant Voice

Last year we set up our new Tenant Voice Panel and Tenant Scrutiny Panel, making sure tenants really do influence and challenge service delivery and development.



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We give you lots of our time and opinions, but how much do you really listen and value us?

Adele Lacy, Tenant Voice.

Berneslai Homes reply:

Without a doubt you are vital to how we are run and we have complete respect for the representation you give on behalf of tenants across Barnsley. Your tenant members now attend our Customer Services Committee where you work alongside board members making sure they listen to tenants when making decisions, you have members who will shortly be joining our repairs and maintenance performance group. You give our managers a tough time asking questions at our performance presentations and over the coming year we want to develop and extend the partnerships you're involved in and the influence you have.

We asked...	Berneslai Homes did
Can you do more spot checks on empty properties?	We are pleased that we've increased the number we do per year, and we will be keeping a watchful eye on the results.
Can you give better guidance on replacement smoke alarms?	The Contact centre have new scripts that acknowledge that smoke detectors have a use by date on them, and they are able to book appointments for tenants that call who need them replacing.
Can you tell us how you deal with damp in empty homes?	We met with staff to gain a better understanding of how damp and mould is dealt with in void properties. We are continuing to look into this and may pass it onto our scrutiny panel for further investigation.
Why don't you decorate poor standard empty homes?	Where decoration is poor we give the new tenant a decoration allowance.
What is the role of the Housing Management Officers?	We are working with the HMO Group Leaders to delve into the day to day role of an HMO and gain a better understanding of what they do.

Listening to you

Co-regulation



As well as the tenant panels, how else do you listen to tenants and residents to make sure services are up to scratch?

Ann Skelton, Tenant Voice.

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Berneslai Homes reply:

We listen and learn in lots of different ways like:

- analysing complaints and patterns in tenant contact (see page 14);
- asking our tenant service excellence assessors to do spot checks and mystery shopping;
- our customer panel;
- meeting our TARAs and community representatives;
- involving tenants when developing new ideas or changing how we do things; and
- tenant feedback from surveys.



873 people completed our STAR survey this year and we highlighted **14** service improvements.



Our assessors checked **32** empty properties.



We held **218** meetings in our local communities.



Our mystery shoppers gave positive feedback about our e-mail and phone service.



WWW.

We're working with tenants as we develop a new website.



Our customer panel met twice and gave ideas about our phone service and repair appointments.

Looking after our neighbourhoods

Estate management and support



Has reorganising your Housing Management Teams to align with the council's area teams made a difference?

Peter Begent, Tenant Voice.

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Berneslai Homes reply:

We think we're working better together, not just in dealing with problems but in engaging with the different communities and understanding their needs. We performed well over the year resolving **2,112** estate based problems and offering low level support to **1,560** tenants. We've also reviewed how we identify and support our vulnerable customers, including changes to our Tenant First service and how we work with specialist agencies.

We know we need to connect more with communities and our new mobile IT systems is allowing us to be out and about more, speak to people, work with our community groups and be present on estates. We're also doing much more on social media at a local level to develop community awareness and joint solutions for issues.



83%
Satisfaction with your
neighbourhood
(86% 2018/19).



We completed
140 Estate Walkabouts
(139 2018/19).



We visited **82%** of new
tenants in **28 days** of
their tenancy starting
(target is 85%).



59 reports of graffiti,
dealt with **58 (98%)**
within **5 working days**
(95% 2018/19).



25 reports of offensive
graffiti, **100%** dealt with
within **1 working day**
(75% 2018/19).



Received **411** reports
of fly tipping and
removed all in an
average of **1.35 days**.

Managing the supply of homes

How we let our homes



How do you manage the supply and demand of your houses?

Linda Cullumbine, Tenant Voice.

Page 58

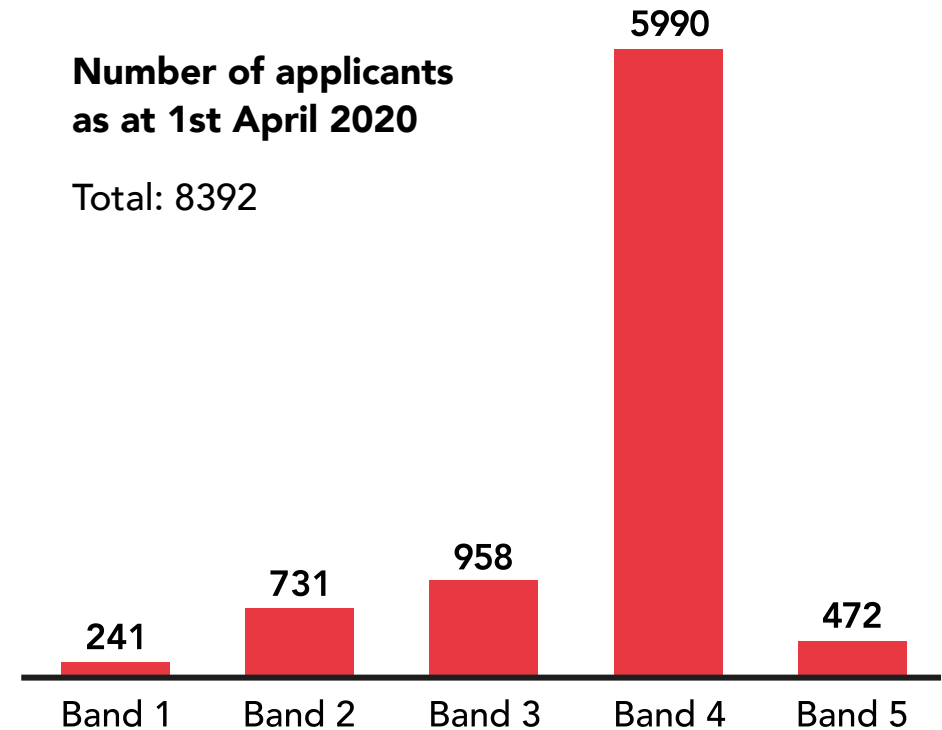
Barneslai Homes reply:

It is our job to offer a lettings service, on behalf of Barnsley Council that is easy to use, fair and ensures that those most in need are rehoused as suitably and quickly as possible.

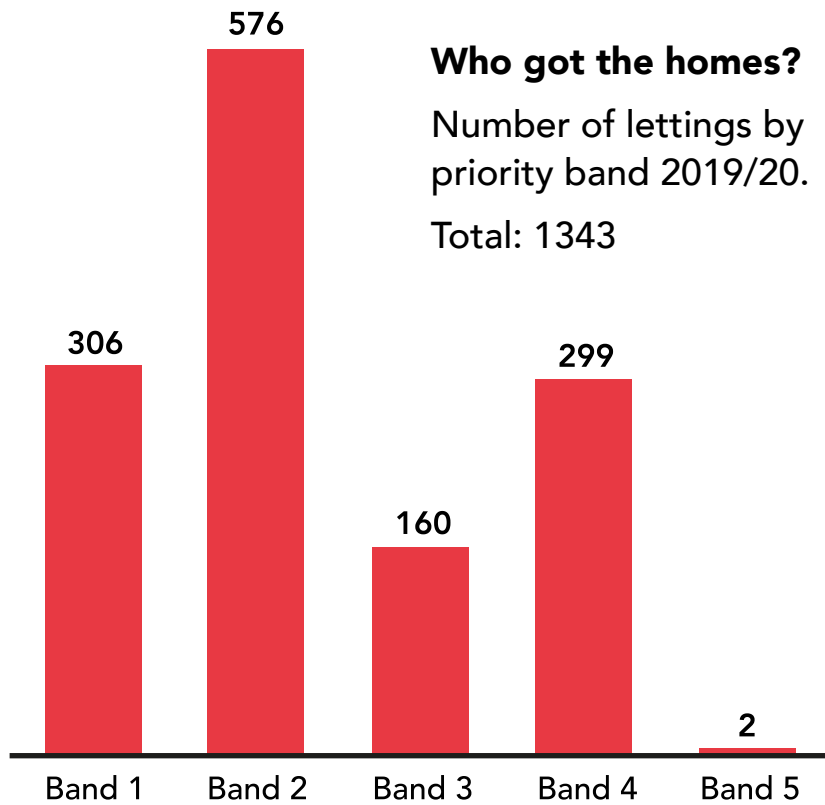
Pressure is building on the waiting list with record numbers of new housing applications being received and a fall in the number of vacancies becoming available to let both in council and Housing Association owned homes. This means that families are having to consider other options, including the private rented sector and are, on average, waiting longer periods to be rehoused. Although the council are purchasing homes on the open housing market, the pressures on the waiting list continue to increase.

Number of applicants as at 1st April 2020

Total: 8392



Property Type	What we have	What we let
Houses	10,527	568
Bungalows	4,638	385
Flats	3028	390
Bedsits	118	21
Private sector homes managed by us	91	12
Housing Association Nominations	n/a	126
Mutual Exchanges	n/a	124



97% of all new applications to join the waiting list were received in 2019/20 via the online housing application form.

Assessed **87%** of **5579** new housing applications received in an average of **10 days** (target 85% in 20 days).

We let **1343** council owned homes in an average of **23.84 days** (20.28 2018/19).

8392 people were on the waiting list as at 1st April 2020 (7,662 2018/19).

93% of bids for vacancies were made online in 2019/20.

Keeping stock levels up



How do you replace the homes you lose through the right to buy?

Chris Green, Tenant Voice.

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Barneslai Homes reply:

Last year we sold **148** homes through the right to buy and whilst we haven't got the funding to replace every home, our good financial management and performance helped us and the council buy or build **95** council homes.

The council now takes a lead on continuing to buy council houses from developers and on the open market, as well as building new homes, but we'll support them by influencing the types of homes we need to meet the demands from the waiting list.



We expect to be on site at Barneslai Close in the Town Centre, converting the old Becketts Hospital building into **9** self-contained retirement apartments for market rent.

34

new build properties developed by BMBC.

19

Purchased from developers.

30

Purchased from previous owners.

12

Offices purchased from NHS and developed into houses.

Development at Keresforth Close

The Keresforth Close, Kingstone development is the result of a partnership between the NHS Trust, Barnsley Council and Berneslai Homes. The buildings were originally built as staff accommodation for hospital workers. They were converted to office accommodation and clinics for the Trust before becoming redundant seven years ago. Since then they have stood empty and neglected until purchased by Berneslai Homes in 2018 on behalf of the council.

The buildings were converted and refurbished to provide 12 “new” social rented council houses completed in July 2019. There are eleven three bedroom family houses and a specially adapted four bedroom house for a family with a household member with a disability. All the properties have been refurbished to a high standard and once completed there was a massive demand from people wanting to live there.

We have also converted what was a semi derelict eyesore into a pleasant place to live well connected to Barnsley Town centre (20 minutes walk), local schools, other local services and close to main traffic routes across the borough and onto the M1.

The project was part funded from the recycled proceeds of Council House Right to Buy sales and helps replace some of the stock lost. It will also provide an anchor for the wider regeneration of the area in the coming years when the NHS Trust vacate the remainder of the site to make way for further new development. We look forward to developing more projects of this type making the most of the public sector resources in Barnsley.



Collecting the rent

Supporting our tenants



What did you do to help tenants pay their rent?

Carlo Turner, Tenant Voice.

Barneslai Homes reply:

We are constantly improving the way in which we collect rent and support our tenants. Our Rents Intelligence system, which was developed in-house, identifies payment trends on rent accounts and systematically prioritises accounts requiring further attention. This enables us to target our resources towards contacting people showing signs of financial difficulty at an earlier stage to offer support and advice.

We have been able to help reduce the financial pressures on families by agreeing voluntary payment arrangements, reducing current payment plans, suspending or changing the frequency of direct debits to help them manage fluctuations in their income, assisting with benefit claims and directing people towards additional financial support. We make referrals to food banks, signpost to Citizens Advice Bureau and to our Barneslai Homes Tenants First service.



Collected **97.48%** of all rent due
(97.85% 2018/19).



50.21% now pay by Direct Debit, online or use automated services.



Low evictions totalling **44** in 2019/20.



93.82% collection rate among tenants claiming housing costs as part of Universal Credit.



29% (997 rent accounts) of Universal Credit housing claimants had the rent paid direct to the landlord.



Referrals to food banks, signpost to Citizens Advice Bureau, Tenants First service and any other relevant support.

Listening to our tenants

Solving a long-standing problem at Woodfield Close in Darfield.



There's been times when the water has come right up to the doors.

Roy, Woodfield Close resident

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Woodfield Close is a quiet cul-de-sac in Darfield, at the end of which can be found a cluster of flats containing a small, close-knit community. When the flats were constructed, no drainage was installed, leading to the problem with surface water flooding the road and even sometimes up onto the walkways. An attempt was made to solve the problem by spreading gravel to create a soak-away, but this proved unsuccessful.

Senior Housing Management Officer Caroline Reeves explains, "it was brought to our attention over a number of years that the gravelled area got worse and worse. Over a long time, tenants approached us to ask if there was anything we could do to address the problem. Unfortunately, because of budget constraints, it took more time than we would have liked to address the issue."



Before: Rainwater collects around the doors and walkways.



During: Groundworks in progress.



After: The new surfaces, with drains to remove rainwater.

John Shilleto, Maintenance Surveyor picks up the story, "We couldn't use our day-to-day budget for the groundworks, so we asked our Senior Management Team for additional funding. The scheme was to take the gravel out, put in a drainage channel to take the water away, put in new walkways and tarmac the area."

Local contractors P. Biddlestone Groundworks & Maintenance Ltd undertook the work, taking four weeks and reaching completion two weeks ahead of schedule. The final cost was a little over £70,000 and the residents are very pleased with the results.

Caroline Reeves continues, "we also worked alongside our Customer Services Team and BMBC's Tidy Team to create a small community garden, which we hope to expand in the future."



The contractor did an excellent job with minimal disruption, and now I can invite visitors to come without wellingtons.

Brian, Woodfield Close resident

Want to find out more about this story?
Visit this [link](#) to watch our video.

MORE THAN
JUST A LANDLORD

Supporting you

Being more than just a landlord



What does being more than a landlord mean? And if money's tight, can you justify the extra services you offer?

Dorothy Hayes, Tenant Voice.

Page 66

Berneslai Homes reply:

It means that we do more than collecting rent and doing the repairs. It's things like...

- Giving budgeting advice, mental health support and tailored support for entire families through our Tenant First Service.
- Working with communities and other organisations – litter picking, bulb planting and coffee mornings.
- Helping reduce social isolation through activities in our community centres, like our dementia café.
- Visiting schools and giving careers advice.
- Having a good apprenticeship scheme.

We see this as money well spent as it reduces problems, increases opportunity and supports our tenants and communities to be the best they can be.



We've secured over **£813,000** of benefit gain for **1400+** tenants.



We've secured **£9000+** of grants to promote financial inclusion.



143 referrals for our mental health workers.



74% of tenants we supported have achieved their goals.



159 referrals to our Family Intervention Service with **80%** achieving all of their goals.



Employed **24** apprentices.



Caring for our tenants



Please tell me what you offer for your older tenants?

Roy Jones, Tenant Voice.

Berneslai Homes reply:

We have 11 Independent Living Schemes as well as 18 bungalow and flat schemes with a community centre, all of which offer tenants a fantastic quality of life as well as security. Our schemes have an on-site manager, key-pad entry and a number of activities to help residents socialise. We are very proud of our scheme at Saville Court in Hoyland, composed of 41 bungalows and flats, clustered around communal facilities. Read on to find out more.

Geoff and his wife live in one of the bungalows at Saville Court and he believes that his home has been a lifesaver, "I suffered a serious heart attack in 2000 and bang, everything just stopped. We decided that we needed to move to somewhere easier for me and to be nearer our daughter."

Geoff values the sense of community at Saville Court, "no one needs to be left alone. The residents look after each other here and you don't have to go far for company. The community centre puts on lots of good social events and trips. Marie the Scheme Manager helps out a lot and encourages people to get involved, I call the bingo on Mondays!"

Ann is the longest standing resident at Saville Court, having lived there since 1986, "when Marie came here as the warden, it altered for the better. She does a good job and always has a smile on her face. The people around here are lovely."

The feeling is reciprocated by Scheme Manager Marie, "I like to get involved with the tenants, arrange activities and see them integrate with each other."

Joyce has lived at Saville Court for eight years, "my home here is very important to me. Once you get in here, you've got a home for life and Marie will help you any way she can."

Saville Court has gone a long way to break the stereotype of older peoples' accommodation. Geoff is keen that the distinction is made between the scheme and old people's homes, "this isn't an old people's home. Everyone here knows everyone else, it is God's little acre!"



Joyce, Geoff and Ann at Saville Court.



Help when you need it

The More Than Just a Landlord Tour

Last December our Tenants First service organised a tour of estates around Barnsley in a bespoke van. Over five days we visited twenty-two estates, offered support to over 400 tenants, their families and friends.

Our main aim was to engage with hard to reach tenants and their families, who may not usually contact us or engage with our services and those who may not be aware of how we can help. This included the elderly and children.

Our objectives were to raise awareness of the services we provide such as support with mental health, financial guidance, employment, defending, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding.

We worked in partnership with our Training and Development team, our Housing Management teams, Council services including Adult Skills and Community Learning, the Warmer Homes team, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and a number of local businesses who kindly donated raffle prizes.

There were free raffle tickets for every tenant who dropped in to speak to us, elderly people were given winter warmer packs, which included branded mugs, gloves and hot chocolate. Children were given a small gift from our very popular Tenants First Santa, present at each stop to hand out hearty ho-ho-ho's as well as free mince pies and cakes.

Although the weather wasn't often at its best, we made a high number of engagements and spread not only Christmas cheer, but valuable support across the borough.



Our Tenants First service offer multi-level support such as:

- Financial advice
- Rent Arrears & Council Tax support
- Support with benefits claims
- CAB Referrals
- Utility & TV Licensing support
- DHP support
- Accessing Grants
- Opening Bank Accounts
- Setting up an email
- Support completing forms
- Support with housing
- Foodbank & Community Shop referrals



On location with the mobile advice shop.

100 Years of Council Housing in Barnsley

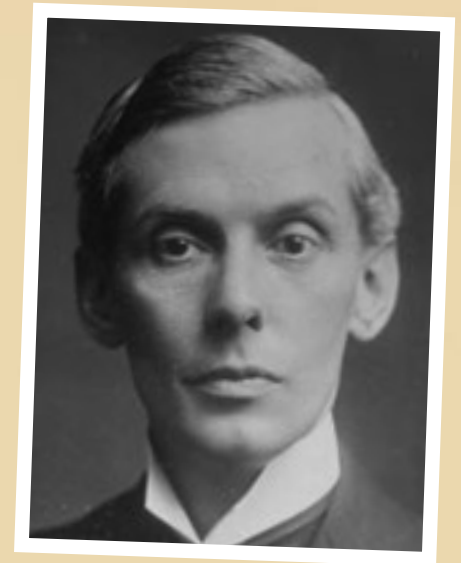
To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Addison Act last year, we organised an exhibition at the new Library @ The Lightbox. This was a collaborative effort including staff from Berneslai Homes, Barnsley Council, Barnsley Archives, Wentworth Woodhouse, local historians and tenants both past and present. We produced exhibition boards, videos and displayed artefacts kindly loaned to us by our tenants.

One of the great pleasures of the project were the dozens of hours-worth of interviews that we conducted with local people, detailing their memories of growing up in council houses in Barnsley. We heard some wonderful stories of the positive difference that council housing made to people's lives, many moving from the slum housing that was cleared from the 1930s onwards.

One such story was that of Cyril Hall, who moved into his house in Lundwood aged just six months in 1926. He succeeded the tenancy from his parents

and raised his own family in the same house. A lifelong advocate of council housing, Cyril even served as chair of the Barnsley Federation of Tenants and Residents. Cyril sadly passed away at the end of last year at the age of 93, but enjoyed a brief spell in the limelight when his story was picked up by both regional and national media.

The aims of the exhibition weren't only to celebrate council housing's 100th birthday, but to highlight why they were needed then and why they are still just as important now. Less salubrious corners of the media have been keen to present council tenants in a very unfavourable light. We enjoyed doing something to redress the balance a little and counter them with positive stories about council housing and our tenants.



**Dr Christopher Addison,
Minister of Health.**

Watch our exhibition video on this [link](#).

Building Abbots Road, Lundwood, circa 1930.
Image courtesy of Barnsley Archives and Leisure Services.



Samuel Square, Gawber, c. 1940.
Image by Fred Wainwright courtesy of Paula Staniforth.



Builders at Athersley South, c. 1950.
Image courtesy of Barnsley Archives and Leisure Services.



Residents of Ridings Avenue, St Helens Avenue and Belmont Avenue, Smithies, celebrate the coronation of George VI on 12th May 1937.
Image courtesy of Ann Moffatt (Smithies TARA)/Don Brooker.





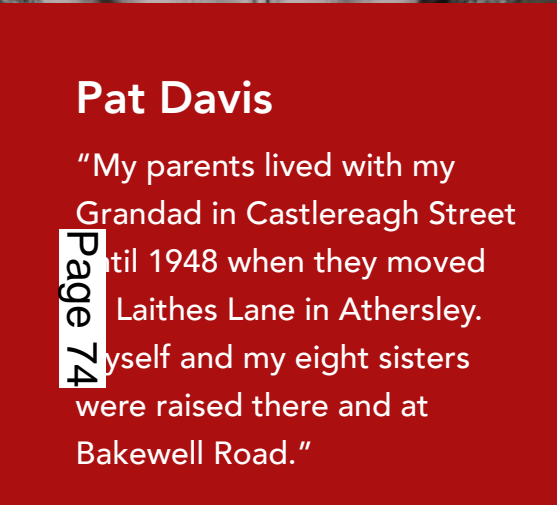
June Whitelam

"We've lived in our house on the Doles Estate in Royston since it was built. We were lucky to get it as they were in high demand. Council housing is the best thing that has happened for people."



Madge Busby

"We moved into our council house in Athersley in 1960, we lived with my husband's Mum before that. Nobody else has lived in my house apart from me, so that makes it special."



Pat Davis

"My parents lived with my Grandad in Castlereagh Street until 1948 when they moved to Laithes Lane in Athersley. Myself and my eight sisters were raised there and at Bakewell Road."



Albert Walker

"After 7 years of trying, we were offered a pre-fab in Royston, but later swapped for a brick built property on the Pinfold Estate. I'm a council house fan and they should be there for everyone."



Joyce Johnson

"Our old house on Cross Lane in Royston was condemned and we eventually got a council house on Station Road. It was like a mansion after the overcrowded house we lived in before."



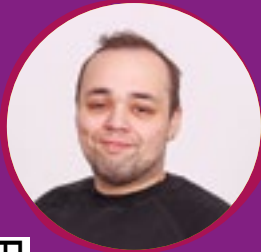
Margaret Tinker

"Our first council house was on Ryhill, where we had a bathroom and an inside, downstairs toilet. It was like magic after having a tin bath and outside loo."



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Preparing for a strong future



How are Berneslai Homes preparing for the future?

Jeffrey Billings, Tenant Voice.

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Berneslai Homes reply:

Over the last few months we've been developing our new Strategic Plan which supports the Barnsley 2030 vision and sets out what we aim to achieve over the next 10 years for our customers, our colleagues and the communities in which we work. Whilst it's a 10 year plan we've focused actions on the next 12 months as we recover from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, supporting tenants and communities and building on the positives that are emerging from the crisis. Our resilience, flexibility and commitment mean we are well placed to continue to deliver excellence but to adapt and seize opportunities for our customers, colleagues and Barnsley 2030.



Our Values

Great Place - We are a local housing company, delivering excellent customer focused services.

Great People - We are an organisation with a can do, positive culture that improves peoples lives.

Great Company - We are agile and responsive, able to improve and grow.



Enhanced customer service with an improved online and telephone service offer.



Stronger governance with a new board structure and performance management.



Develop our learning culture which responds to the tenant voice.



Move towards a zero carbon stock.



We want to hear from you

Your voice is vital to help us deliver services in the right way.

Although Coronavirus has reduced our face to face contact,
you can still keep in touch.



www.berneslaihomes.co.uk



customerservices@berneslaihomes.co.uk



General Enquiries: 01226 775555
Repairs (24 hours): 01226 787878



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