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MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Growing Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday, 2 November 2021
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

AGENDA

Growing Barnsley Workstream

Councillors Bowler, Coates, Ennis OBE, Felton, Fielding, Lodge, Markham, McCarthy, Noble, Osborne, Pickering and Sumner.

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 *(To Follow)*

To note the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee (Sustainable Barnsley Workstream) held on 12th October, 2021 (Item 3 to follow).

Overview and Scrutiny Issues for the Committee

4 Berneslai Homes Annual Report 2020-21 *(Pages 3 - 20)*

To receive a report of the Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes and the Executive Director Core Services, BMBC with regard to the Berneslai Homes Annual Report (Item 4a and 4b attached).

Enquiries to Jane Murphy, Scrutiny Officer

Email scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk

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

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bowler, Bowser, Cain, Clarke, Coates, K. Dyson, Felton, Fielding, Frost, Gollick, Green, Hand-Davis, Hayward, D. Higginbottom, Kitching, Lodge, Lowe-Flello, Markham, McCarthy, Mitchell, Newing, Noble, Osborne, Pickering, Richardson, Risebury, Smith, Stowe, Sumner, Tattersall, Wilson, Wraith MBE and Wray 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

Arturo Gulla, Executive Director of Property Services, Berneslai Homes

Dave Fullen, Executive Director of Customer & Estate Services, Berneslai Homes

Matt Gladstone, Executive Director – Place, BMBC

Kathy McArdle, Service Director, Regeneration & Culture, Place Directorate, BMBC

Sarah Cartwright, Head of Strategic Housing, Sustainability & Climate Change,
Place Directorate, BMBC

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

**Report of the Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes
and the Executive Director Core Services, BMBC
to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)
on 2nd November 2021**

Berneslai Homes Annual Performance Review 2020/21

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the annual performance of Berneslai Homes for 2020-21.
- 1.2 Item 4b (attached), the Berneslai Homes Together with Tenants Annual Report, provides a more detailed reflection on the achievements and challenges faced during the year and has been developed with their Tenant Voice Panel, a group of nine tenants who meet to share their views on how the service is performing.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Berneslai Homes is the arm's length management organisation (ALMO) managing the Council's 18,500 homes across the borough. This includes:-
- managing the waiting list and letting vacant homes
 - collecting rent
 - repairing, maintaining and developing homes and estates
 - supporting people facing financial difficulties
 - keeping estates clean and tidy and dealing with any issues of anti-social behaviour
 - supporting people to manage their tenancy
 - engaging with and listening to their customers and communities
 - working with Barnsley Council to build and acquire new homes for tenants
- 2.2 At a Cabinet meeting in September 2020, in accordance with renewal arrangements, the contract between Barnsley Council and Berneslai Homes was extended for a further 10 years until 2031.
- 2.3 In October 2020, Berneslai Homes presented their annual performance report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, along with a new ten-year strategic plan, setting out the key objectives for the following 12-18 months with a view to developing longer term priorities during 2021, linked to the new Barnsley 2030 vision.
- 2.4 The key priorities for the period to April 2022 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

3.0 Current Position

3.1 Despite the challenges presented by Covid, Berneslai Homes managed to keep most of their services running during lockdown, including engagement activities with tenants.

3.2 Item 4b (attached) outlines how the service:-

- performed against indicators relating to keeping homes in good repair; customer services; safety; and responsible neighbourhood management
- engaged with tenants to hear their views and acted upon what they were told
- managed finances effectively, ensuring value for money for Berneslai Homes and the Council
- worked with the Council to begin reviewing the lettings policy and enhance the lettings service to rebalance supply and demand; offer realistic advice, information and alternative options; and improve the customer experience
- learned from complaints and feedback received during the year
- developed systems, processes and partnerships to support income management and help tenants access the right benefits and money advice
- carried out repairs; appointed a Building Safety Manager and an Occupational Therapist; developed new technology to complete inspections; begun investing in reducing the carbon footprint; and completed two Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes
- ensured that estates are safe, clean and happy places to live in via the work of the Housing Management Team
- provided a holistic housing and estate management service to support residents and communities across the borough, including help to overcome barriers around education and training; tenancy support; and independent living schemes
- looked at the customer experience when contacting Berneslai Homes and what improvements could be made, ensuring that they are welcoming to all

4.0 Future Plans & Challenges

4.1 The Regulator for Social Housing is working with tenants and landlords across the country to develop a set of national performance and tenant satisfaction measures which all landlords would have to publish. This will provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance and inform how a landlord is complying with the consumer standards.

4.2 Over the coming year there are plans to continue to engage with tenants living in flats to develop awareness of fire safety.

4.3 In summer 2022, tenants will be able to order and track a repair online, book and change appointments and give feedback. This will also improve the contact centre service for those who choose to make contact by phone.

4.4 Despite completing two of the Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes in 2020/21 four others were not completed and there are plans to catch up during 2021/22.

4.5 To support the council to achieve its carbon reduction targets, during 2021/22 Berneslai Homes will be investing in homes by spending:-

- £1m on flood resilience in Lundwood
- £13.5 m for Barnsley Homes Standard works
- £2m for adaptations
- £1.6m for extensive works
- £0.7M for heating upgrades
- £1.9M for zero carbon works such as air source heating, solar panels and insulation

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
- Arturo Gulla, Executive Director of Property Services, Berneslai Homes
- Dave Fullen, Executive Director of Customer & Estate Services, Berneslai Homes
- Matt Gladstone, Executive Director – Place, BMBC
- Kathy McArdle, Service Director, Regeneration & Culture, Place Directorate, BMBC
- Sarah Cartwright, Head of Strategic Housing, Sustainability & Climate Change, Place Directorate, 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 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 have been the greatest challenges over the last 12 months and how did you overcome them?
- How is work progressing against the six key priorities up to April 2022? Do you expect to achieve everything you set out to do?
- What are likely to be the priorities beyond April 2022 and when do you expect those to be identified and embedded?
- What is being done to ensure appropriate support is available to the increasing number of households who are vulnerable and have support needs?
- What fire safety measures are in place for tenants living in flats?
- Can you give specific examples of how the Tenant Voice Panel has directly influenced service delivery?
- 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?
- When do you expect to be back on track with the Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes targets?

- What are Berneslai Homes' greatest challenges associated with minimising the carbon footprint and contributing positively to the Council's Zero 40 and Zero 45 targets?
- How will Berneslai Homes continue to contribute to the employment, education and skills agenda over the coming 12 months?
- What do you foresee as the biggest challenges in the coming 12 months for tenants as well as Berneslai Homes as an organisation?
- How has the Charter for Social Housing Residents (the social housing white paper), published in November 2020, impacted upon the work of Berneslai Homes?
- What actions could be taken by Members to support the work of Berneslai Homes and their tenants?

7.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

- Item 4b (attached) – Berneslai Homes Annual Report to Tenants 2020-21
- Berneslai Homes Strategic Plan 2021-2031:-
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71434/Item%204b%20-%20Berneslai%20Homes%20Strategic%20Plan%202021-31.pdf>
- Berneslai Homes Annual Report 2019-20:-
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71435/Item%204c%20-%20Berneslai%20Homes%20Annual%20Report%202019-20.pdf>
- Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – October 2020:-
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=38972>
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

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

Jane Murphy, Scrutiny Officer scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk
20 October 2021

TOGETHER WITH TENANTS



Annual Report
2020/21



Amanda Garrard
Chief Executive

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

Welcome to our annual report, developed with our Tenant Voice Panel, and which summarises:

- how we delivered for you in the period April 2020 to March 2021; and
- our plans for improving our service offer.

It's certainly been a year like no other and one which has left lasting change for us all.

We did amazingly well to keep most of our services running during the three lockdowns, so I'm sure you'll be understanding that we didn't meet all of our targets. I'm pleased to say that even though we're still in the pandemic, we're fully back on track, progressing many improvements to our services: safety, investment in our homes, zero carbon, online services, and importantly how we're listening and reacting much more to your voice, not just the voice of the involved tenants, but all tenants.

We've developed a new strategic plan which secures a great future, refreshed our company values and we've rebranded our service (at very little cost of course)!

I hope you enjoy this annual report.

A. J. Garrard

Amanda Garrard
Chief Executive

Our values

Customer first
you'll be at the heart of all we do.

Can do attitude
we'll make change happen, fix problems and adapt to achieve.

Curious
we'll look beyond face value to get things right.



I'm thrilled to be introducing this annual report after my first year as Chair of Berneslai Homes, and to echo Amanda – what a year it's been! My responsibility as Chair of Berneslai Homes is to deliver strong and effective governance and ensure Berneslai Homes is:

- meeting all its legal and regulatory duties such as keeping you safe, keeping homes modern, treating you well, and listening and learning from your feedback;
- spending money wisely, is well managed, open and transparent;
- fulfilling its duties on behalf of Barnsley Council;
- responding to change, resolving issues; and
- planning for a strong future for social housing in Barnsley.

Over the year, we've changed our board structure and recruited new board members who've brought experience and skills to strengthen our challenge and direction of the company. And for next year my promise to you is that my Board will be true to our values.

S. Butters

Sinéad Butters
Chair



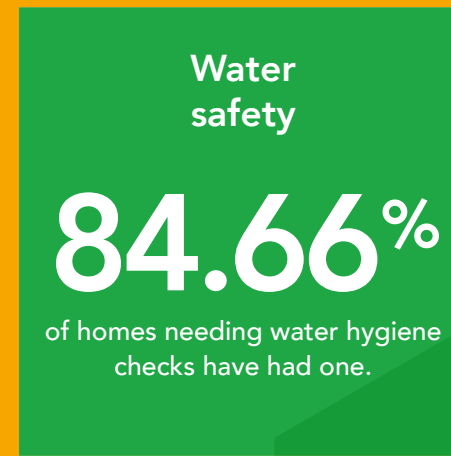
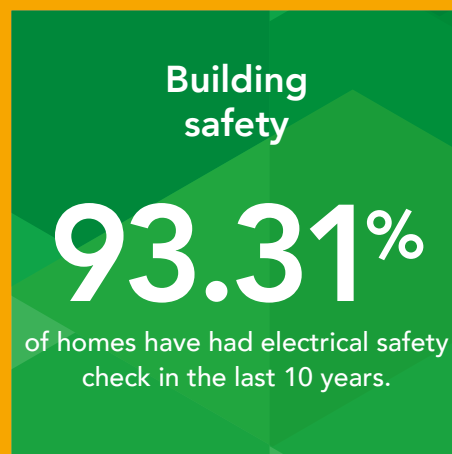
Sinéad Butters
Chair of the Board

HOW WE DID AT A GLANCE

The Regulator for Social Housing is working with tenants and landlords across the country to develop a set of national performance and tenant satisfaction measures which all landlords would have to publish. This will provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance and inform about how a landlord is complying with the consumer standards. The measures, which are still in development, will cover things that matter most to tenants.

We really support this move and so in this section you'll see how we performed against the types of measures being discussed. As they are still in development there are no national targets and comparisons but we've highlighted where we've met our own target and to show whether you're getting a great deal in Barnsley we've also, where the data is available, included how well we compare to other landlords*.

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On the next pages you'll find more information about our services, what we did well, why we didn't do so well in some areas and what we're doing to improve services.

* The comparison data relates to performance in 2019/20. 2020/21 data will be available October.



TOGETHER WITH TENANTS

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A reflection on the year from our Tenant Voice Panel

Our Tenant Voice Panel are a group of 9 tenants who meet up several times a month to give tenant views and challenge on how we're performing, changes we're making and that we're listening and acting on the tenant voice. They support 9 other tenants on the Scrutiny Panel who dive deep into our service to make sure we're doing the right things, in the right way.

It's been a strange old year, but we decided right at the beginning of the pandemic that nothing was going to stop us achieving our goal of ensuring that Berneslai Homes meets its responsibilities set out in the Consumer Standards* and that tenant scrutiny continues. So as soon as lockdown was announced we moved our meetings online and have never looked back.

We've been really busy, meeting anything from once a month up to two or three times, working alongside officers on some exciting projects.

- Repairs online (see more on page 7)
- Asset Management Strategy
- Recruitment of senior managers, board and customer service roles
- Berneslai Homes Customer Charter

Alongside this we've reviewed performance reports, helped develop this annual report and are thrilled that Berneslai Homes have achieved so much despite the challenges.

We hope you enjoy reading the Annual Report, as much as we have enjoyed helping write it. Thanks to all tenants who've given their views over the last 12 months; helping shape services and the roadmap through Covid.

We've got a learning landlord and every voice really does matter so if you have an issue or opinion you'd like us to look at just let us know by emailing tenantvoice@berneslaihomes.co.uk.

What's our scrutiny panel been up to?

Berneslai Homes website

We said...
Lots of info and easy to use online forms but: needs to be easier to get around and the search and apply is difficult to use.

Berneslai Homes said...
A new website is on its way – we'll involve tenants as we build it.

We've made some changes to search and apply and more to follow.

Complaints

We said...
Great service.
Meets the standards of the Housing Ombudsman Code.

A few inconsistencies in quality of response.

Berneslai Homes said...
We're training all staff in complaint handling.

We've changed our approach and are focussing on learning.

What's next for scrutiny? Damp and mould

In July 2021 we made a start looking at how Berneslai Homes deals with damp and mould.

Berneslai Homes Customer Charter

We've agreed with Berneslai Homes a six point set of promises for how they will deliver services. Over the year we'll be checking how Berneslai Homes measures up to their promises. Here's what YOUR landlord is promising.

Relationships

We'll treat you with respect and develop relationships based on openness, honesty and transparency.

Communication

You'll receive clear, accessible and timely information from us on the issues important to you including information about:

- your home and local community;
- how we're working to address problems; and
- how we're run and performing.

Voice and influence

We'll seek and value your views and use them to inform decisions.

You will feel listened to by us on issues that matter to you.

You can speak without fear.

Accountability

We'll work in partnership with customers to independently scrutinise and hold us to account for the decisions that affect the quality of your homes and services.

Quality

You can expect your home to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.

When things go wrong

You will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress.

You will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

* Consumer standards (set by the Regulator for Social Housing) are a set of standards all landlords have to meet when delivering services. Find out how we met them on our website.



TERRIFIC TARAS

Powering through the pandemic!

It's been a difficult year for all of us, and although lockdown restricted some of the usual engagement activities it didn't stop us continuing the conversation with our community groups. Our community centres had to close and our TARAs had to change the way they reached out. To help the TARAs do this, we provided devices to those who wanted to meet online and respected the decision of those who did not, as we know that online sessions aren't for everyone.

Here are just a few examples of what some of the TARAs got up to:

Wombwell TARA distributed care packages to their vulnerable members, including sanitiser and face masks, they also held online competitions with great prizes, gave out *Winter Warmer* packs and even delivered food parcels. A fantastic achievement!

Great Houghton TARA made the most of their social media pages by sharing information, even holding a socially-distanced audience with Santa for the younger members! Even though they couldn't roll their sleeves up and help out, they made a donation to a local primary school for a *mud kitchen*.

Redbrook TARA collected a magnificent 20 bags of food for the *Gateway Foodbank*. It was so successful they will be repeating it!

Carlton TARA held an online *Christmas Lights* switch on event and kept in contact with their members using social media, very creative!

Smithies TARA have entered the digital world and have attended all online *Community Forum* meetings using 'Teams'. Although not as many people could attend, the group has carried on with their litter picks throughout the pandemic, social distancing of course. The group increased their efforts to stay in touch with members and residents in the surrounding area to make sure there was a friendly voice at the end of the telephone.

Athersley TARA used their devices we provided them with to attend our 'Your Community Your Say' meetings, to keep in touch with Berneslai Homes and with their local community.

Ardsley TARA kept their members up to date by using their Facebook page. They also continued to maintain their community planters when distancing allowed, to ensure their local area continued to look 'blooming lovely'.

Grimethorpe TARA were very proactive on their social media, with over 1000 members, which they used to carry on their work in the community. They had a brilliant turnout as residents came together to transform the neglected flower beds outside St Luke's, back to the beautiful displays they once were. They have done socially distanced litter picks and ensured all COVID-19 testing and vaccine information was kept up to date.

You see even a global pandemic hasn't stopped our terrific TARAs!

"This has been a difficult time but our group has not been deterred from supporting our community."

Houghton TARA

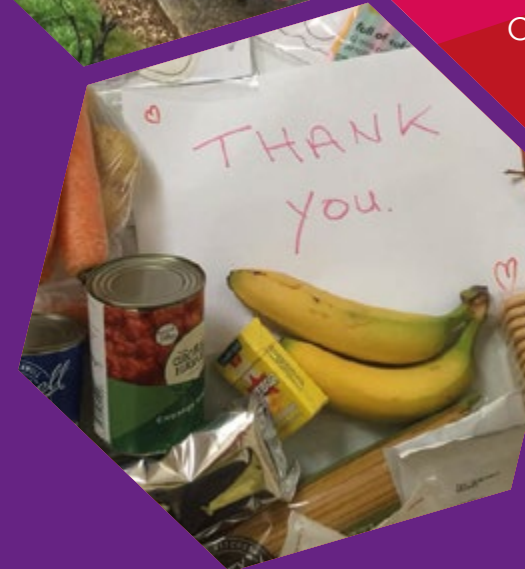
"We are looking forward to getting back out and about and developing some new projects."

Bob Perry
Secretary, Redbrook TARA



"TARAs are more important than ever as a voice for their local communities."

Madge Busby
Chair, Athersley TARA

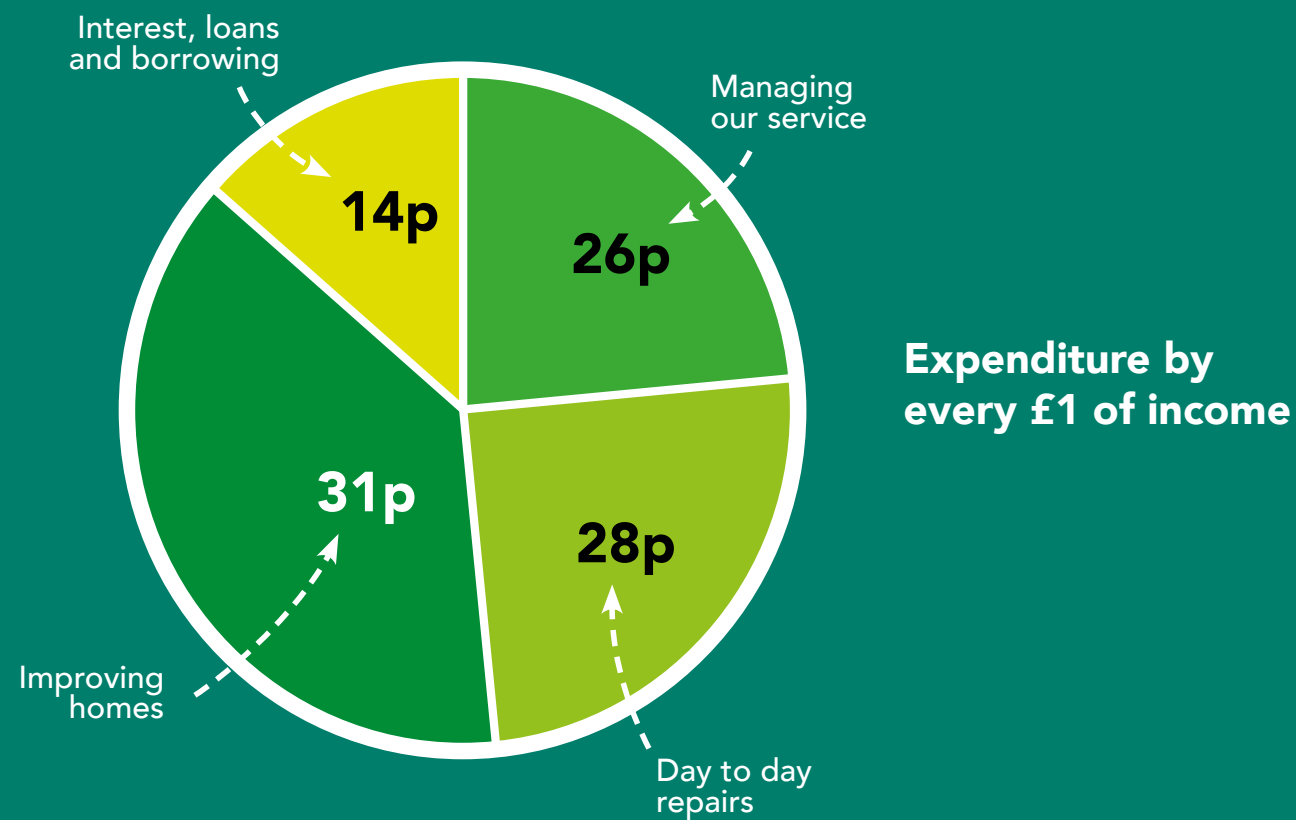




HOW WE SPEND YOUR MONEY

"Managing our finances effectively and ensuring value for money for Berneslai Homes and Barnsley Council is critical. Last year the Council spent £72.2 million on council housing. Barnsley Council gave us £12.2 million to manage the services and here is how we spent the money on average per household."

Faye Williams Head of Finance



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We collected **97.18%** of all rent due.

78.76% of funds were spent locally, supporting the local economy and keeping the 'Barnsley Pound' in Barnsley*.

We made **£477,000** of efficiency savings that we can invest back into services.

How we spend our management fee

Managing repairs and improvements*	£165
Tenancy management	£96
Rent arrears and collection	£81
Supported housing and supporting people	£41
Estate services**	£8
Lettings	£50
Resident involvement	£34
Anti-social behaviour***	£16
Development	£11
Leasehold	£6
Other	£137

* 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.

* 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.

REPAIRS AND INVESTMENT



"It's been a challenging year running the repairs service, but we still managed to deliver against most of our targets, improve our approach to building safety, welcome our new partner Wates and made a start developing our new repair IT system."

Dan Crossley Head of Repairs, Maintenance and Building Safety

Did you know...

£10.7m

spent on completing **74,999** repairs in your homes.



99.5%

of priority repairs completed in **24 hours** (target 99.5%).



8.4 days

on average for non urgent repairs (target 9 days).



98%

of appointments kept (target 98.1%).



88.5%

satisfaction with repairs completed (target 94.3%).

77%

of the **4,201** planned maintenance inspections completed in **28 days** (average time 22 days).

Adapting homes

£2m

spent on completing **74,999** adaptations in your homes.

145 days

on average to complete adaptations (target is 58 days)*.

£152,991

spent on **914** minor adaptations taking just **7 days** on average (target 8).



KEEPING HOMES SAFE

"We're one of the first landlords in the country to appoint a Building Safety Manager and my priority is to build on and enhance our great safety track record. We reported on page 3 our strong performance on gas, fire, asbestos and electrical testing. You may have noticed that we're still below target for our water hygiene testing but we've improved our performance by 20% in the year and we're on track for full compliance later this year. Over the next year we'll be continuing to engage tenants living in flats to develop awareness of fire safety, what to do if there is a fire and what we've done to make your buildings as safe as possible."

Kerry Storrar Building Safety Manager



OUR NEW REPAIRS OFFER

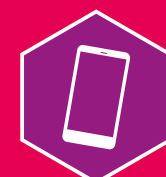
"When we go live with this exciting project in summer 2022, you'll be able to order and track a repair online, book and change appointments and give us feedback. And if you prefer to phone us, the changes will improve our contact centre service as all the information we need will be on one system so our colleagues on the phones will be able to sort you out more quickly and efficiently!"

Terri Fisher Repairs Project Manager



IMPROVING OUR ADAPTATION SERVICE

Last year we appointed our own Occupational Therapist to concentrate on adaptation assessments in our homes and to help make sure that we rehouse people in homes suitable for their needs.



REMOTE INSPECTIONS

During the pandemic we developed some new technology for planned maintenance officers to complete inspections by connecting to you using mobile phones. Saving the need for a home visit, reducing travel and speeding up the process.



INVESTING IN YOUR HOMES

We're investing in our homes to improve energy efficiency, reduce our carbon footprint and support the council become net carbon zero by 2040. Last year the council approved a capital investment programme of almost £22 million for 2021/22 and as part of the £153.6m 2021 to 2026 Council Housing Improvement Programme.

This year we're spending:

- £1m on flood resilience in Lundwood
- £13.5 m for Barnsley Homes Standard works
- £2m for adaptations
- £1.6m for extensive works
- £0.7M for heating upgrades
- £1.9M for zero carbon works such as air source heating, solar panels and insulation.



DECENT AND ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES

Last year because of Covid we only fully completed two of our Barnsley Homes Standard Improvement Schemes (252 homes) and started on four others (951 homes) spending £6.6 million and achieving almost 98% tenant satisfaction. Over 2021/22 we'll catch up and keep your homes decent!

John Dowle Interim Head of Asset Management

INCOME MANAGEMENT



"I joined Berneslai Homes in May 2021 and was immediately impressed by our successful firm but fair approach to collecting rent and supporting tenants facing difficulties. I want to build on that firm foundation and improve our income management service, which is even more important than ever due to the financial instability caused by Covid. So here's what we're working on..."

- Automation of payment reminders and early stage arrears contact (automated phone call, text and email).
- Enhancing our IT system and staffing structures to streamline the service so we can highlight rent payment concerns earlier.
- Strengthening our partnership working with agencies such as DWP and Barnsley Council and our own Tenant First service to make sure our tenants receive the right benefits and money advice."

Shubash Miah Income Manager

Did you know...



We collected **97.18%** of all rent due which is a fantastic achievement given the impact of Covid on people's incomes.



Arrears were **2.60%** of our rental debit. Up from **2.24%** in March 2020 when we were one of the best performing landlords in our peer group.

7,158 tenants were in arrears, up from **6,160** in March 2020, but **68%** of those in arrears owed less than £250.

Case studies

We supported a family to challenge a determination by the DWP, successfully recovering a **£4,000** under-payment of Universal Credit.

We supported a tenant struggling to pay rent and other debts to claim almost **£6,000** in Discretionary Housing Payment – a much needed lifeline to get back on track.

We pulled in **£1.1m** additional income including welfare benefits and Discretionary Housing Payments, and grants secured for our customers and assisting **112** access **£97,379** from the hardship fund.

LETTING HOMES



"After only a few months as Lettings Manager at Berneslai Homes I've got a real feel for how valued and popular social housing is in Barnsley. That's great but it leaves the council and us with the problem of meeting the housing needs of the growing number of people in priority need whilst also managing the expectations of those applicants with lower priority. So working closely with the council we're well underway with reviewing their lettings policy and enhancing the lettings service with our aims being to:"

- Rebalance supply and demand.
- Offer realistic advice, information and alternative options.
- Improve the customer experience including quicker relet times, better adverts and better feedback."

Liam Davies Lettings Manager

The Housing Register

7,482 on the housing register There's been a **59%** increase in band 1 applications and **39%** increase in band 2 since 2020.

BAND	NO ON LIST	NO LET TO BAND
B1	304	451
B2	933	383
B3	958	139
B4	4,846	206
B5	361	2



Customer research to enhance our new tenant experience

"Over the spring we completed several surveys and spoke to applicants and new tenants about their experience. Here's a little of what we found and what we're doing about it."

Joanne Huxley and Chloe Allott Customer Insight Team

YOU SAID...	WE ARE...
53% of applicants not actively bidding say they look but can't find a suitable home.	...improving information about stock availability and advice about priority so that applicants can decide up front if they will have a realistic chance of getting a council house.
28% of people refusing properties gave multiple reasons and 14% said it didn't meet their needs.	...improving the advert content.
From being offered a property to moving in is a tough time and we'd like to have more regular communication.	...reviewing our service offer and systems to keep in more regular contact with new tenants.

40 days We relet our homes in an average of **40 days** last year it was **24 days** which was top to middling performance compared to other landlords*.

0.94% Rent loss as a result of empty homes was **0.94%** which compares well across other landlords where the average was **1.35%**.

*The reason we missed our targets was due to Covid.

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK



“Some complaints help us identify small improvements, training needs or just where we might need to remind our staff of procedures and policies that we have in place. This is positive and demonstrates we are listening and learning from what you are telling us. However, some complaints might highlight bigger improvements that are needed to help improve the service that we deliver to our tenants. This could result in a full policy or procedure review which can be more complex and time consuming for us to implement although essential.

We identified 22 service improvements from complaints which resulted in a policy or procedure review. We issued over 26 reminders to staff and developed numerous training opportunities as a result of listening to complaints.”

Toni Allen Customer Services Manager

A few more examples of how your complaints and feedback are helping us to improve services.

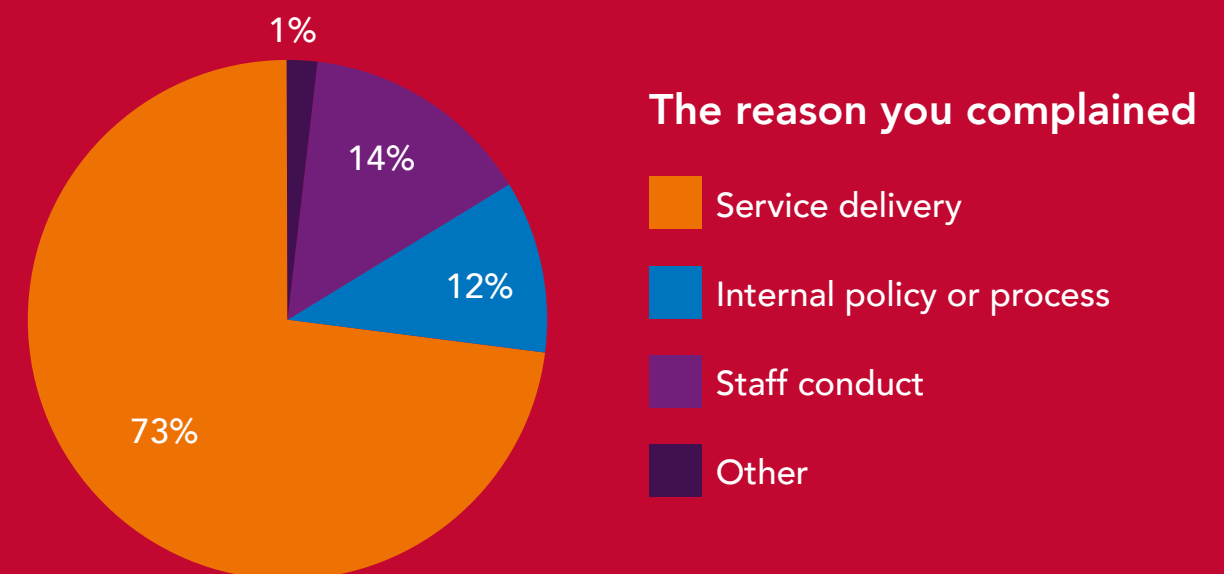
YOU SAID...	WE DID...
We need to know what's actually included in a gas service.	We've updated our website and tenant information.
Gas servicing letters can be confusing and not relevant to my circumstances.	We've amended the standard template letters to make them clearer.
The messages on the phone lines are too long.	We've updated them to make them shorter.
I didn't know my responsibilities when using the store rooms at communal schemes.	We now display notices in store rooms and have revised our policy for when tenants use the store room which includes an agreement form.
I'm a new tenant with the use of a communal garden I would like to be told my rights and obligations.	We've reviewed procedures and communication to provide written information to new tenants.
I would like to be consulted about communal fencing before permission is granted.	We've amended our procedure to ensure this happens.
Information on the website around antisocial behaviour isn't clear.	We've made amendments to our webpages.
My only toilet was out of use due to extensive repairs and I should be offered a portable toilet.	Our contractors now have a stock of portable toilets to use in these exceptional circumstances.
My heating is broken and due to health issues I can't use temporary fan heaters.	Our contractors now have a small stock of oil filled radiators to issue on medical grounds.
I'm having a replacement kitchen fitted and have so many questions, communication should be better.	We've introduced a tenant information pack and meet face to face to discuss the work to improve communication (currently trialling this).
We are having problems with the e-form system timing out when completing long forms.	We've made changes to the system to prevent this happening.

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Last year you made:



The top three services you complained about were:





HOUSING MANAGEMENT

"We've worked tirelessly with the council and key partners to ensure a flexible frontline service to support residents and communities across the borough. Due to the Covid pandemic our Housing Management Teams provided a lot more low-level support than usual. We are proud to have continued to deliver excellent customer services and tailored our services to meet the needs of our customers.

Our teams have embraced new ways of working through agile working and virtual meetings for our resident engagement which makes a real difference to our residents and communities."

Darren Asquith Housing Management Group Manager

Did you know...

<p>84% of you are satisfied with your neighbourhood (83% in 2019/20).</p>	<p>We completed 31 estate walkabouts (140 in 2019/20).</p>	<p>We visited 85% of new tenants in 28 days of their tenancy starting (target is 85%).</p>	<p>We're reviewing our approach to Housing Management.</p>
<p>We received 17 reports of graffiti dealt with 100% within 5 working days (98% in 2019/20).</p>	<p>We received 6 reports of offensive graffiti and dealt with 100% within 1 working day (100% in 2019/20).</p>	<p>We received 425 reports of fly tipping and removed all in an average of 1.98 days (411 in 2019/20).</p>	<p>We're seeking views of partners and residents about ASB and crime prevention. We'll use feedback to shape services on specific estates.</p>

Our Housing Management Teams have helped by...



SUPPORTING YOU



"It's my key priority to ensure delivery of a holistic housing and estate management service to support residents and communities across the borough. Despite all the restrictions during this last year, our teams have continued to safeguard and support families, children and vulnerable adults, whilst adopting safe working practices. I'm really passionate about putting customers at the heart of our service delivery, listening to their voice and tailoring services to meet their needs."

Kat Allott-Stevens Head of Estate Services



EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

"Our European Social Funded (ESF) 'Achieve' programme started in January 2021; supporting customers and their families to overcome barriers they are experiencing around education or training and helping them move further towards the jobs market and ultimately gain employment.

Customers are supported with issues including confidence building, digital inclusion and IT skills, vocational training, career guidance, job searching, CV writing; and interview skills. We provide financial support where it's needed to pay for such things as licences, interview clothes and travel costs too.

We are pleased that we are on the way to achieve our target of supporting 360 customers by December 2023, when the funding ends."

Nicola Flett ESF Manager (Tenants First Service)



HOUSING COACHES

"We've recently employed five housing coaches who work with prospective tenants deemed high risk of tenancy failure, often having multiple and complex needs. We provide them with practical hands-on support, tailored to their unique circumstances and help them to become 'Tenancy Ready' to sustain future tenancies.

Dominic Dimanna
Tenants First Team Leader

Did you know...

Our family intervention service has supported

164

households with multiple and complex needs, with an overall success rate of **70%**.

Our mental health housing related support service has supported

114

with an overall success rate of **69%**.

There has been a heavy emphasis on support around **low level mental health** during Covid to help our most vulnerable tenants across the whole service.



INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEMES

"A priority is to support our Independent Living Scheme residents to successfully maintain their tenancies and thrive within their communities. During non Covid times the team facilitate and support a variety of social activities and other activities focussed on the health and wellbeing of our residents. These include gentle exercise, crafts, coffee mornings, games and trips out, to name but a few.

It's been difficult for our residents this year who have really missed these activities during the pandemic. We've worked as a 'good neighbour' in all our schemes, carrying out wellbeing calls and some visits to our residents giving them individual support where needed, such as shopping and making referrals to other agencies.

We also supported various activities and events that could be done either in residents' homes or socially distanced. Some of these have been in conjunction with other agencies such as Age UK."

Jill Barker Community Buildings Manager

Did you know...

Our Community Buildings Team are responsible for the management of the communal areas within our **11** Independent Living Schemes; **18** Community Centres; and **8** communal laundries.

The team also support volunteers who manage **13 community centres** on our behalf.

Our Scheme Managers carry out health and safety and fire safety inspections of the buildings, fire alarm testing and maintaining on-site records.

We've had **104**

referrals, with **63** being signed up to 'Achieve', our ESF programme up to 31st March 2021. This is over double our target.

Our tenant support officers have helped

1,856

households and secured over **£1,103,246** additional income for tenants and their families.



BEING EASY TO DEAL WITH

"It's fantastic that last year 87% of you said we were easy to deal with, but why did 24% of you have to make follow-up contact to get your issues resolved? And which bits of our service are easier to use than others? That's my team's priority: to find out more about your different experiences using our services, understand your expectations, what made your contact good or bad, and prioritise what we need to change to make us consistently easy to deal with."

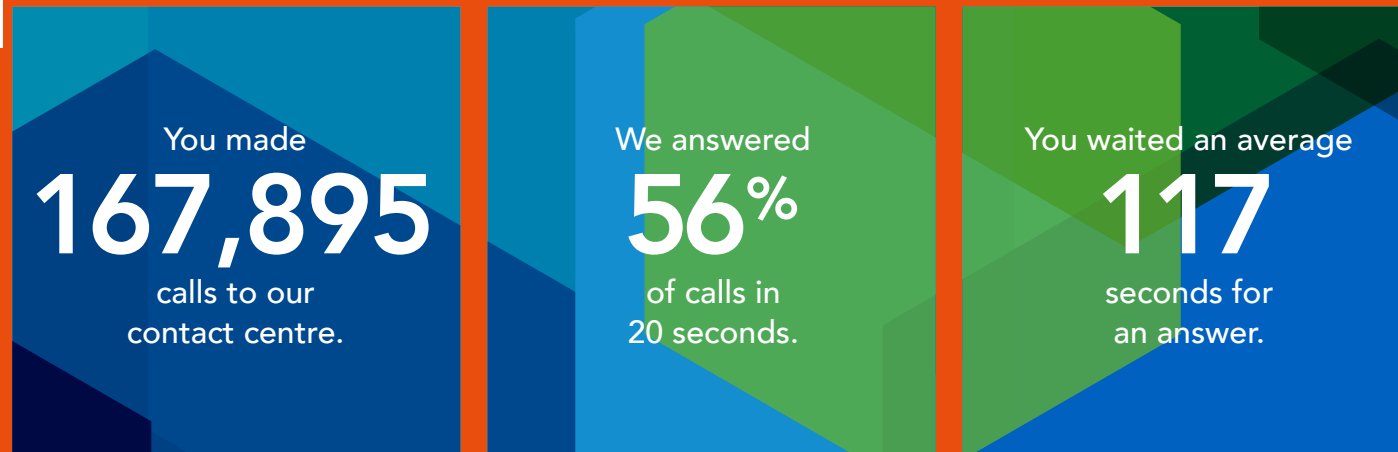
Sarah Barnes Head of Customer Services

Using our online services (continued)



Last year we focussed our team discussions on listening to tenants, breaking down barriers and seeing the person.

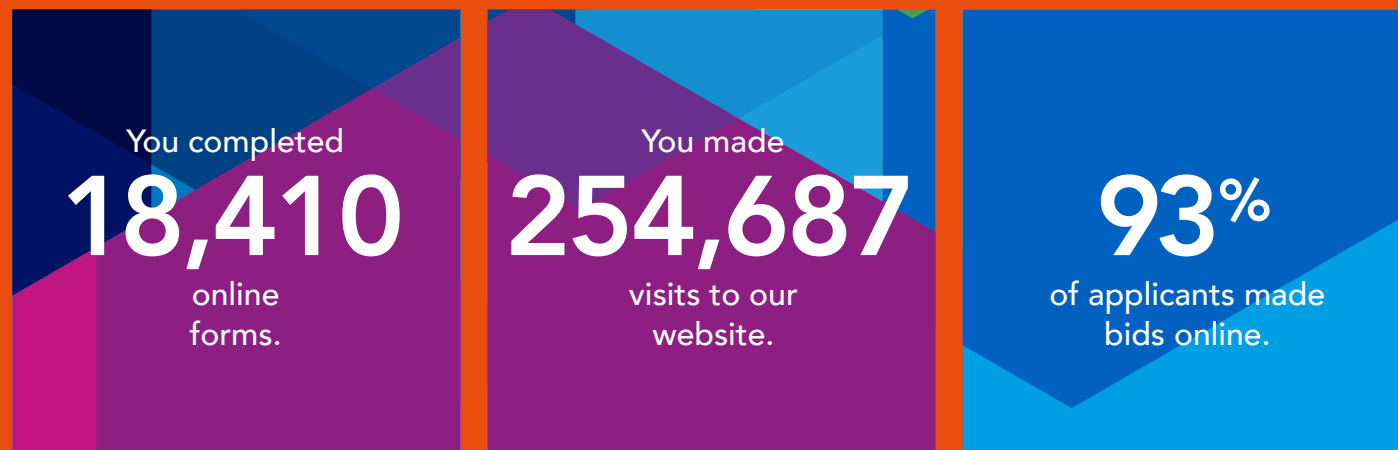
Phoning us



What are our customer experience improvement priorities?



Using our online services





MAKING OUR COMPANY WELCOMING TO ALL

“Our customers aren’t all the same so we adapt and enhance our service to meet your different needs. And as a large employer in the borough it’s vital that we treat our staff fairly, welcome differences and encourage our local people to work with us.”

Lynne Horton Organisational Development Manager

Here are a few actions from last year which make us a welcoming landlord and employer and which supported our communities...

- **Kickstart** – We recruited 15 young unemployed people for 12 months under the government funded Kickstart placements.
- **Harry’s Pledge** – We signed up to this national commitment to support, recognise and champion carers. We hold regular meetings with tenants, employees, partnerw organisations and the wider community to make positive change for carers and their families.
- **BAME recruitment workshop** - We’ve held workshops with BAME residents to understand their barriers in employment and how we can make our recruitment process fair and accessible for all.
- **Mentoring Circles in partnership with DWP** – we’ve held sessions with young people to raise awareness of employment opportunities, support and mentor them, giving the best chance of success in employment.
- **Talent United** – in partnership with Barnsley College we’ve held events with construction students to raise awareness of Berneslai, what we do and what job opportunities we have.
- **Translation service** – we have a new 24/7 translation and interpretation contract in place, removing barriers in using our services.
- **Accessibility** - We’ve made changes to our website to enhance accessibility. It works well with external translation and accessibility software that customers may choose to use.

Alongside all of this, we’re delighted to have received accreditation by Housing Diversity Network for our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion with 10 areas of distinction in good practice. We’re looking forward to continuing our journey and acting as a beacon of good practice.

Did you know...

Gender split of our workforce

Female 51%
Male 49%

59%

of our tenants define themselves as disabled.

Gender split of our tenants

Female 60%
Male 40%

5%

of our tenants are BAME.

Age range of our tenants

under 25	4%
26-55	46%
56-65	18%
66-85	28%
Over 85	4%

5.5%

of our workforce define themselves as disabled.

2.3%

of our workforce are BAME.

68%

of our tenants use the internet.



We want to hear from you

Your voice is vital to help us deliver services in the right way. Please let us know what you think of our Annual Report by filling in the short survey at this link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/annual21/>



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PO Box 627, Barnsley S70 9FZ



It's OK to complain!

We're not perfect, so if we've let you down in any way, please tell us so we can put things right.

Call us on

01226 775555

or use one of our

online forms



www.berneslaihomes.co.uk

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August 2021