

YOUR VOICE

BERNESLAI HOMES Annual Report 2019/20

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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.



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.

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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



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.

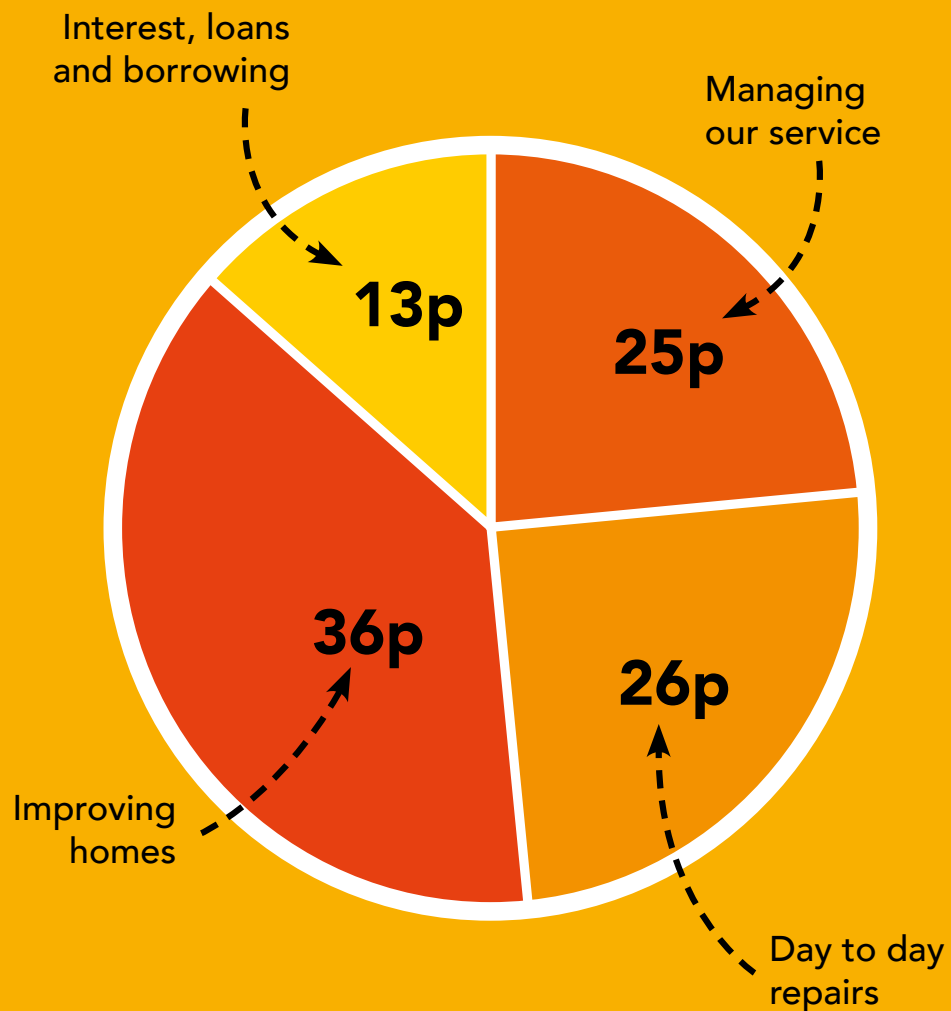


We made **£516,540** of efficiency savings that we can invest back into services.



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

Expenditure by every £1 of income



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.

Berneslai Homes reply:

The **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** seen in the table right, are 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.



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.



87%
satisfaction
with repairs
(89% 2018/19).



82%
right first time
(81% 2018/19).



Spent
£11.5 million
on repairs and
maintenance
(£11.4m 2018/19).



Completed
70,687 repairs
(73,420 2018/19).



Completed
99.9% of
urgent repairs
in 24 hours
(99.8% 2018/19).



Completed
non-urgent
repairs in
9 days
(8.7 days 2018/19).



Kept **99.3%**
of repair
appointments
(99.5% 2018/19).



Completed
major
adaptations
in **73.4 days**
(target 58 days).



Completed
minor
adaptations
in **7.3 days**
(target 8 days).

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.

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.

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.



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.



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.



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.



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.

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.

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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

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.

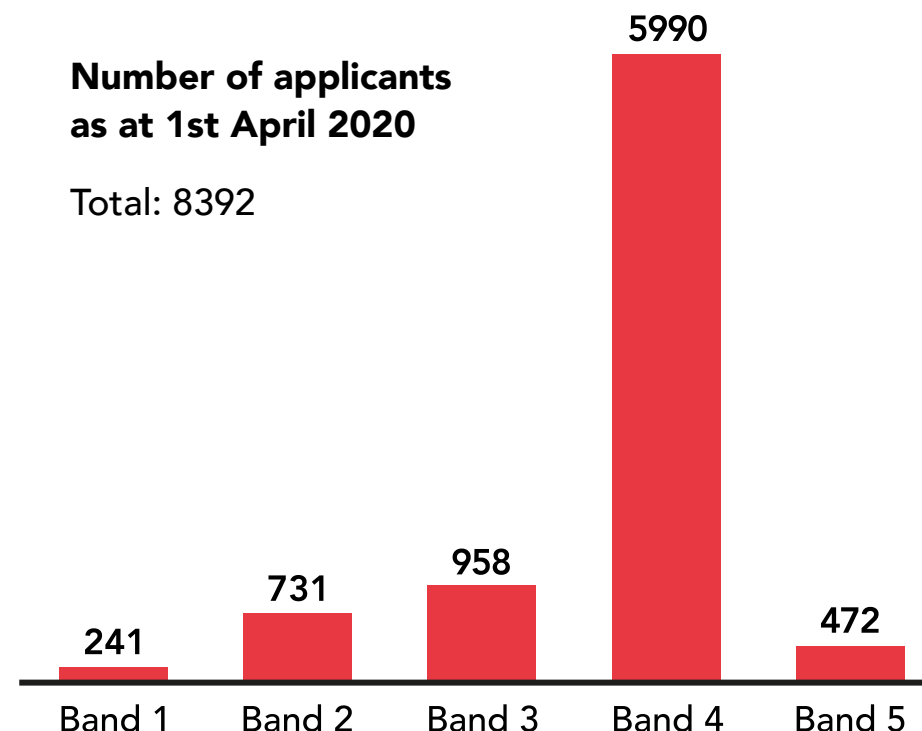
Berneslai Homes reply:

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.

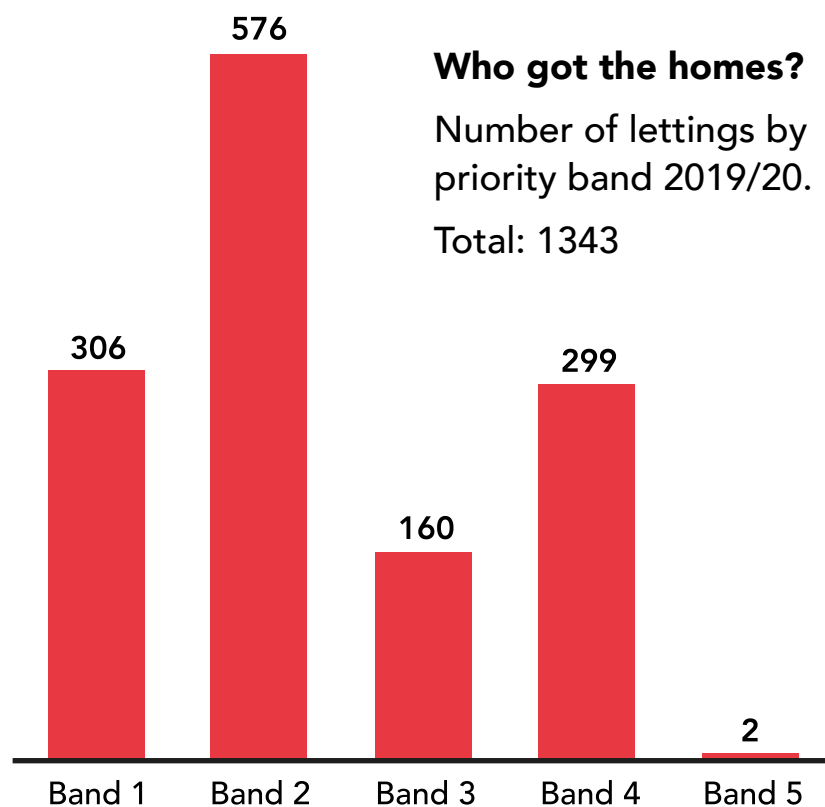
Pressure is building on the waiting list with record numbers of new housing applications being received and a fall in the number of vacancies becoming available to let both in council and Housing Association owned homes. This means that families are having to consider other options, including the private 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.

Berneslai 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 Berneslai 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.

Berneslai 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 Berneslai 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

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.

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, offending, 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.

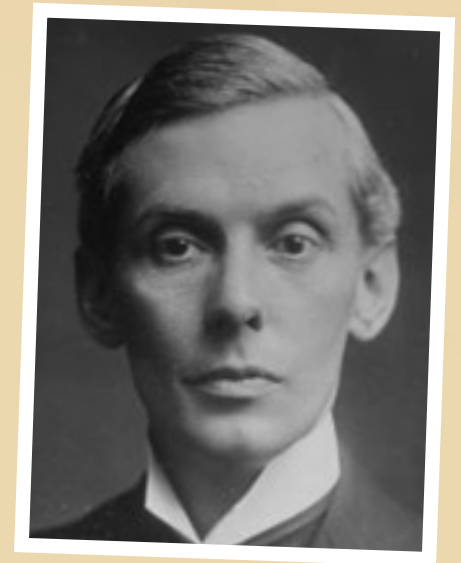
One of the great pleasures of the project were the dozens of hours-worth of interviews that we conducted with local people, detailing their memories of growing up in council houses in Barnsley. We heard some wonderful stories of the positive difference that council housing made to people's lives, many 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](#).

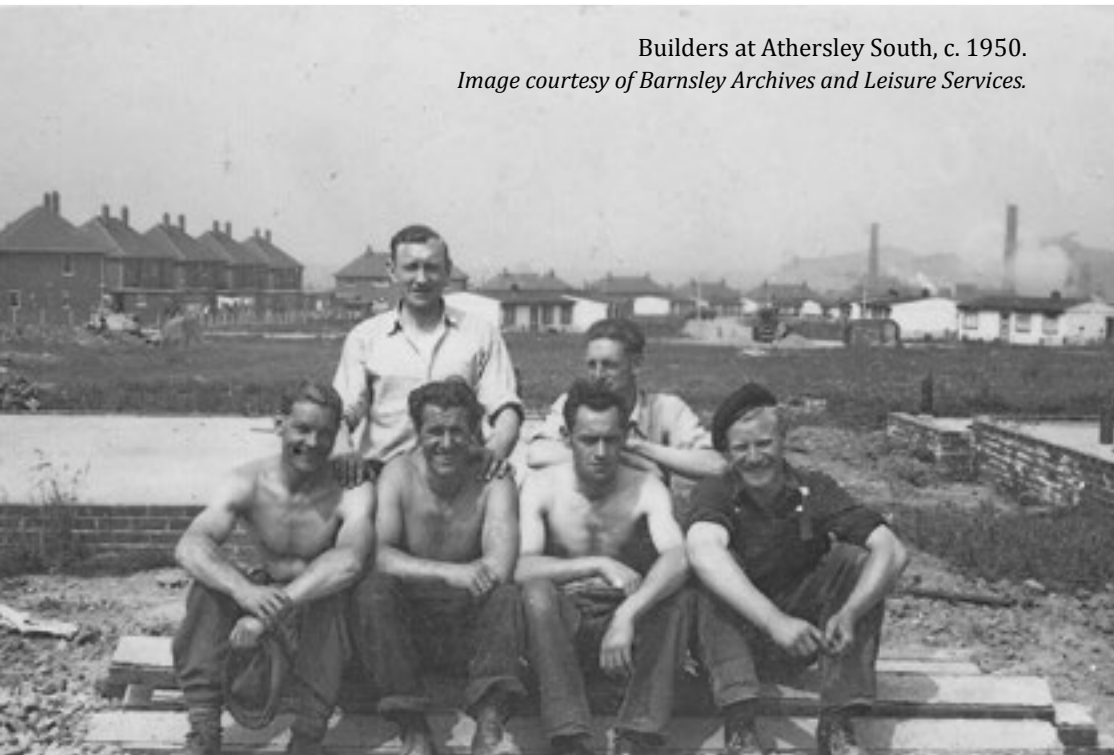
Building Abbots Road, Lundwood, circa 1930.
Image courtesy of Barnsley Archives and Leisure Services.



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."



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."



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."

The background of the image is a vibrant purple with a sunburst or starburst pattern. Numerous thin, light purple lines radiate from the center towards the edges, creating a dynamic, energetic feel.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Preparing for a strong future



How are Berneslai Homes preparing for the future?

Jeffrey Billings, Tenant Voice.

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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