



Continuing to listen, learn, and improve with tenants
Annual Report 2024-25

An introduction from Berneslai Homes and Barnsley Council



Berneslai Homes, Barnsley Council as the landlord, and involved tenants have worked closely together to produce this annual report for 2024-25.

We were very happy with a positive inspection outcome from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), becoming the first local authority to receive a C1 judgement. This was a great outcome for the council, Berneslai Homes, and particularly our involved tenants and leaseholders, who give up their time to make sure the tenant voice is heard and at the heart of service delivery and design.

We see the judgement as a baseline from which to strive for continued improvement, and together we've put plans in place to keep on reducing backlog repairs and voids, listening and acting on tenant views, and continuing to build on partnership working especially around anti-social behaviour.

Keeping tenants safe continues to be our priority and we're pleased to see significant investment in building and fire safety works and continued strong performance across all compliance areas.

Over the last few years, there have been many announcements and consultations taking place around council housing in a bid to improve the quality and safety of homes, including the implementation of Awaab's Law linked to resolving damp and mould issues. We welcome the proposals set out by government and we've been working closely with key partners and tenants, so we're fully prepared to meet our obligations and make sure tenants are clear on the services that we offer.

There are continued challenges in managing our council homes, making sure we provide quality services whilst maintaining a balanced budget in difficult financial times for all. We're clear in our ambitions to not only deliver a good service to existing tenants but also explore ways to increase the numbers of homes we have available to meet increasing housing needs across the borough.

Ken Taylor
Chair of the Board
Berneslai Homes

Councillor Robin Franklin
Cabinet Spokesperson –
Regeneration and Culture

An introduction from your editorial group

Welcome to this year's report which reviews the delivery of services for 2024-25.



Our editorial group of involved tenants and leaseholders

We'd like to reflect on the judgement made by the Regulator of Social Housing last November. The Regulator sets Consumer Standards to make sure we, as tenants and leaseholders, experience high quality homes and services.

The Regulator highlighted several areas of good practice in Barnsley including the range of opportunities for tenants to give feedback. As members of the newly-created Check It Challengers programme, we can agree with confidence that "feedback and scrutiny provided by tenants has directly and positively impacted service delivery".

The highest C1 judgement doesn't mean everything is perfect but it does give us reassurance that our landlord (Barnsley Council) and management organisation (Berneslai Homes) know about the areas where they can do better. They have plans in place to keep on working hard to hear our feedback, make improvements, and provide the best service possible to customers.

We all appreciate honesty and transparency, and throughout this report we'll be commenting on some of the successes, challenges, and opportunities available. Look out for the editors' comments icon. We hope you enjoy reading it and if you'd like to get involved in helping Berneslai Homes shape and improve services, visit www.berneslaihomes.co.uk/get-involved for more information.

Bob, Carol, Elizabeth, Geoff, Kan, Rachel, Sharon, and Tony
on behalf of tenants and leaseholders



Look out for our editors' comments and celebrations!

75.2%

Overall satisfaction with services

Peer Group Median = 65.9%

Data for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures was collected from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2024. The survey was sent to a sample of 3,533 tenants with a good response rate of 33%. Peer Group Median = Housemark TSM performance for peer group (Large Local Authorities and ALMOs excluding London with >15k stock).

Keeping tenants safe

We've worked together to find solutions to issues in the high-rise buildings and communal areas, and changes have been made to the fabric of some homes to make them even safer. A great example is in Worsbrough Bridge – see the case study on the next page, where retrofit works are making homes safer and more energy efficient too!

71.5%

Satisfaction home is safe
Peer Group Median = 73%

Our highlights:

- Improvements to high rise buildings and communal areas including new digital noticeboards and automatic refill sprinkler tanks.
- Worsbrough Bridge pilot scheme completed to improve fire safety and EPCs to C rating.
- Getting ready for Awaab's Law including damp and mould training delivered to tenants and leaseholders.

The Regulator was reassured that all areas of legislation and compliance are covered, giving us confidence as tenants and leaseholders that safety is the priority here in Barnsley.



I feel safer where I live, but it also looks really nice from the street and my heating bills are coming down which is really good news!



A tenant living in Worsbrough Bridge

100%



Fire risk assessments



Gas safety checks



Asbestos surveys



Lifts maintenance



Electrical inspections*



Water safety (Legionella)



This is great to see and shows that safety is number one!

*Ten-year electrical inspections are 99.93% due to no access. The team is working to carry out these inspections as a priority.



Case study

Worsbrough Bridge fire safety pilot project

The pilot project had two key aims – to make properties safer by reducing the risk of fire, and to make properties more energy efficient, achieving an Energy Performance Certificate C rating.

Works included the removal of the old dark timber cladding and the installation of a fresh new silicone render finish. The new render is formulated to provide better fire resistance, offering an additional layer of protection against the spread of flames and reducing the risk of fire-related damage to buildings.

As well as being a safer option, it's also a money-saving option for tenants. Tenants living in these properties were delighted with the results – not only do their homes look better from the outside, they feel better on the inside. The increased energy performance means their homes can stay warmer and energy bills are lower. Win-win!

The pilot scheme was a great success and this approach is now being rolled out to more properties.



Scan the QR code to watch the short film 'Retrofit – developing homes fit for the future':



Repairs and Maintenance

Nobody wants to be waiting ages for outstanding repairs to be completed, and it's really important to keep good communication going when things don't go to plan. Barneslai Homes teams have reduced the number of outstanding planned repairs and replacements, and they continue to listen to our feedback.

Home improvement surveys are helping them to understand the quality and safety of homes to make decisions on future investment that will maintain and improve homes. Surveys are now on a rolling programme, so if you're contacted about one, we encourage you to respond.

We can't forget voids. Across Barnsley empty council properties cost thousands of pounds to get ready for rental again. The good news is a dedicated task team is working to tackle this ongoing issue.



This is a figure everyone would like to see improve as nobody likes to be waiting too long for repairs. It's good to know that Barnsley is performing better than the peer group median.

The Regulator said Barnsley Council takes action to review its repairs and maintenance service and to improve outcomes for tenants when issues occur.



In 2024-25 we completed **912** major adaptations including ramps and level access shower rooms.

We carried out works on over **593** homes costing approximately

£5.8M under the Barnsley Homes Standard. This makes sure decency is maintained.



74.4%

Overall satisfaction with repairs service

Peer Group Median = **70.2%**

70.7%

Satisfaction the home is well maintained

Peer Group Median = **67.4%**

67.5%

Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

Peer Group Median = **66.5%**



1,000 Solar PV

Case study

By the end of March 2025, 300 installations had been completed as part of the 1,000 Solar Homes project in Barnsley including council-owned homes and Hillcrest Community Centre to reduce running costs.

The project is a partnership between Energise Barnsley, Barnsley Council, and Berneslai Homes designed to reduce fuel poverty, lower carbon emissions, and generate income for the community.

The project benefits include:

- Generate 41,000 MWHs of energy, free for council tenants
- Save 24,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions
- Save tenants around £300 annually on their electricity bill

Listening to more and different voices

The engagement team at Berneslai Homes have been creating even more opportunities for you to get involved. The more of us who can provide feedback, the more and different voices will be heard as we work together to shape services.

77.9%

Satisfaction that the landlord *treats me fairly and with respect*

Peer Group Median = 74.8%

62.3%

Satisfaction that the landlord *listens to tenant views and acts upon them*

Peer Group Median = 56.5%



This is something we'd like to see increase and it's good to know that there are many different ways to hear from more and different people. This is a low performing measure across the peer group, with Barnsley well above the median.

The Regulator highlighted a commitment to treating tenants with fairness and respect in Barnsley and recognised that there's a focus on further improving tenant engagement and feedback mechanisms.

Engagement during 2024 – 25

Open tenant meetings

26

meetings held

168

tenant voices heard

Tenant voice panel meetings

6

meetings held

29

tenant voices heard

Customer panel

3

meetings held

63

tenant voices heard

Check it Challengers

16

projects

233

tenant voices heard

Engagement tours

9

places visited

95

voices heard

Multi-agency events

10

events attended

39

tenant voices heard

Case study

Damp and mould training

Working with Efficiency North, a formal online accredited training course has been delivered to tenants along with the STAR campaign so that everyone can spot the signs and take appropriate action.



I found this course very informative and will definitely carry out some of the suggestions in my own home to try and remedy issues in own bathroom. 

Scan the QR code to hear from some of the participants:



Case study

Young care leavers

A new tenancy ready pilot course was designed in partnership with Barnsley Council to support young care leavers preparing to live independently. The course covered everything from budgeting and utilities to how to raise repairs and get involved as a tenant.

Sessions were well attended and positively received, and the course will be rolled out to offer further support for care leavers in Barnsley.

Scan the QR code to watch a short film about the course:



62.5%

Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them

Peer Group Median = 67.0%

Smithies Lane Gypsy and Traveller Site

Case study

Some fantastic work has taken place with residents at Smithies Lane Travellers site, listening to their feedback and building trust to support them in a positive way. From health needs and rent letter support drop ins to a children's craft session and NHS immunisation, the engagement team has been finding new ways to effectively support families. Ongoing partnership working with Barnsley Council and the NHS continues to make sure they get the support they need.

To find out more about the ways you can give your views, visit our website, email or call the team.
www.berneslaihomes.co.uk/get-involved | 01226 774114
communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk

Delivering services for you

Income

The income team is focused on tenant sustainability, and they’ve made good use of new technology (Voicescape) to automate some contacts with customers and increase the number of quality conversations to offer support and advice regarding rent payments.

It’s great to know that technology is being used in the right way to allow the team to then offer more intensive support and recovery work to the people who need it.

In 2024-25 we collected £86.8M of rent, 100.52% of rent due*

*Overall collection rate as defined by Housemark.

Lettings

The Regulator was assured that in Barnsley properties are let in a fair and transparent way that takes into account the needs of tenants and prospective tenants.

The new Homeseeker Lettings Policy launched on 1 April 2024, and is delivering against its aims to rehouse those in most need first:

- Restricted access to the waiting list for those who can resolve their own housing needs and those living out of the borough with no local connection.
- Tightened criteria for Band 1.
- Reduced the overall size of the waiting list.
- 759 let homes last year with 86% of lettings going to applicants in Band 1 and 2.

Size of the waiting list	Oct 2022	Apr 2025	Change
Band 1	303	129	-57%
Band 2	1079	893	-17%
Band 3	958	673	-30%
Band 4	6387	2569	-60%
Band 5	597	Deleted	–

Making every pound count



£28.6M
Improving homes



£27.3M
Day to day repairs



£16M
Managing our service*



£1M+
of recurrent annual savings

*Including tenancy management, supporting tenants, income (rent) collection, and tenant involvement.

Help and support when you need it

The Tenants First team offers a range of tailored support to help you sustain your tenancy and get the most out of living here in Barnsley. They can help with a wide range of tenancy issues including family intervention support and mental health housing support. From things like budgeting advice and housing coaching to more complex issues, they understand that you might be facing challenges.

The team has a successful track record of reviewing household finances to reduce costs and identifying unclaimed benefits and grants. This past year has been no different and they've worked in partnership with Citizens Advice to get some impressive results:



£2.3M+

total value of financial support referrals accepted

2,077

tenants helped

£1.23M+

benefits gain value

£62K+

funding and grants value

£1M+

rent gains value



£468K+

total value of financial support referrals accepted

151

tenants helped

£26K+

benefits gain value

£12K+

funding and grants value

£929K

total debt handled

£430k+

debt written off



The support offered by the Tenants First team is second to none – they are really making a difference to people's lives here in Barnsley.

Ange*

Case study

Ange is a single mum of three autistic children. Faced with all the challenges of raising her family and managing her home, Ange began to feel overwhelmed and was struggling with her own mental and physical health. She was neglecting herself and the property and found it difficult to let Barneslai Homes officers into the home to carry out repairs. The Housing Support Grant was used and Ange's house is now a home with repairs completed, conditions improved, and a better quality of life for the whole family. Ange feels much better physically and mentally and is looking forward to the future.

Joe*

Case study

Joe struggles with poor mental health and substance misuse and was finding it hard to keep his property clean and tidy. The Housing Support Grant was used to provide a deep clean and removal of unwanted items from the property. It was the extra lift Joe needed to get back on top of things and feel houseproud again. He's now looking after his home and getting the support he needs to make positive changes including accessing training and education to learn a trade.

*Names have been changed.

In *your* neighbourhood



It was noted by the Regulator that Barnsley Council together with Berneslai Homes make effective use of partnership opportunities working proactively to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour, taking into account tenant needs and signposting tenants to support.

With dedicated teams focused on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and supporting tenancy sustainability, Berneslai Homes is working hard to take an early intervention and prevention approach, with enforcement as a last resort. The co-location of all four neighbourhood teams based at Carlton has supported effective collaboration.

ASB continues to be a challenge in Barnsley and it can really affect your life and community. The ASB team are committed to hearing your feedback. They've identified some improvements to their ways of working to deliver a better service to you if you're experiencing ASB where you live, including:

New risk assessment and action plan - if you report ASB, you'll complete and agree the plan with the team, so they can better support and communicate with you throughout the case.

New closure summary – when a case is closed, the investigating officer will complete a summary with the complainant covering what was reported, what actions were taken, any support identified, and the positive and negative aspects of the process.

More partnership working – as well as supporting campaigns like ASB Awareness Week and Barnsley's own 'No place for hate', the team meets regularly with partners to discuss successes and areas for improvement.

55%

Satisfaction landlord
makes a positive
contribution to
neighbourhoods

Peer Group Median = **59.9%**

47.6%

Satisfaction with
landlord's approach
to handling anti-social
behaviour

Peer Group Median = **54.5%**

61.7%

Satisfaction that
communal areas
are clean and well
maintained

Peer Group Median = **62.5%**



While these measures are lower than we'd like to see here in Barnsley, we're looking forward to seeing things improve during the next twelve months. We encourage you to support the work of your local neighbourhood team by attending estate walkabouts and sharing feedback about where you live.



The ASB team works closely with partners including Barnsley Council, South Yorkshire Police, and the RSPCA to effectively tackle issues in your community.

Improving employment and skills

Growing your ambition

The Ambition programme offers tailored support to those not currently in education, training, or work and has successfully supported over 180 people in its first year. But don't just take our word for it, read some of the fantastic case studies in this section!



The Ambition coaches are so dedicated and it's inspiring to see them doing their best to support people to reach their full potential.

Want to know more?

If you want to know more about the Ambition programme or to register your interest, all you have to do is email workandskills@berneslaihomes.co.uk

Let the team know the best way to contact you and one of them will get in touch!

Case study

Fatemeh

Fatemeh wanted to develop her existing skills and work to build a successful career. As a busy mum of three, she was struggling to find work or training that would fit in with her life, but with the help of her ambition coach, she was matched to a local course.

Over ten weeks, Fatemeh trained with a beautician to learn skills like waxing, spray tanning, head massage, manicure, and pedicure. She received valuable advice and guidance from her tutor, discussed future plans, and was supported to look into things like additional funding, progression steps, and how to advertise her new business.

Fatemeh said:

“The Ambition team helped with funding so I could learn beauty and gain qualifications thanks to Gentle Touch Beauty.

I can now enjoy my life and have some extra money coming in to give my children the life they deserve.”



Roman, one of the new multi-skilled apprentices learning on the job

Dylan

Case study

When Dylan first met ambition coach Lisa, he was shy and lacked confidence. As they spent more time together, they were able to break down the barriers he faced including looking at finances, thinking about the future, and exploring local learning opportunities. He agreed to visit Northern College where a new 'Ready to work' course, was about to start. Dylan still had to overcome his anxiety to make the two-bus journey, but with the support of Lisa and tutor Paul, he was able to attend and successfully complete the course learning about things like health and safety, housekeeping, and hospitality.

Lisa said: 🗨️ Dylan has come such a long way in a short time, and he's loved his journey from adversity to ambition. It's onward and upward now and he can't wait to start his new chapter at Rotherham College! 🗨️

Supporting early careers

Berneslai Homes creates great career opportunities for local people and during the last year the new 'multi-skilled apprentice' roles proved extremely popular with a total of 174 applications submitted. Of those, 58 attended and took part in a skill building activity before being shortlisted to 26 who were invited to interview. The three successful applicants are now part of the team helping carry out repairs and maintenance in different trades and gaining a Property Maintenance Level 2 qualification.

19 work experience placements

20 students attended Work Inspiration event

16 T-Level placements completed

22 apprentices supported
4 through Enable Futures

Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeships are offered in a wide range of areas including plumbing and domestic heating, business admin, plastering, HR and more!



Dylan with tutor Paul

Learning from your feedback and complaints

Over the past year, Berneslai Homes has improved their approach to gathering feedback. A new feedback system (Voicescape) has been introduced, meaning more surveys can be sent to tenants to capture real-time feedback across all the services they deliver.

During 2024–25

138,698

surveys were sent

6,235

surveys were
completed



The Regulator found that complaints are addressed fairly, promptly, and effectively and that the landlord:

- learns from information on complaint types and outcomes
- understands the impact on tenants when it gets things wrong
- Identifies when improvements need to be made and responds accordingly

These changes allow Berneslai Homes to:

- address any issues promptly, making sure things don't escalate
- reach out to more tenants, so they have a chance for their voices to be heard
- improve services and create a better customer experience

If you're sent a survey to give your feedback on a recent transaction, please take a few minutes to fill it in. Berneslai Homes wants to hear from you!

Tenants are actively encouraged to share feedback with Berneslai Homes, good or bad, and they are committed to learning and improving from it. Barnsley is still in line with the national trend, seeing an increase in the number of complaints. In the Complaints Handling Survey, tenants gave this feedback to Berneslai Homes:

74%

Easy to complain

72%

Staff listened and understood

82%

Staff treating complaint fairly



Berneslai Homes don't always get it right, but they will bend heaven and earth to try and correct any wrongs.

A tenant living in Hoyland



It's understandable that if you've made a complaint you're not always going to feel happy with the outcome, but it's helpful to note that Barnsley is performing well above the peer group in this challenging area. In fact Barnsley is one of the best in the country.

44.5%

Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints
Peer Group Median = 31.2%

Here are some of the service improvements made this year:

"I feel like I'm waiting a long time to get a decision about my re-housing."

To speed up the response with customers, decision letters are now sent by email. This also reduces printing and postage costs.

"I was offered a property but it took months before I could view it. I was told the property needed major works."

Berneslai Homes has introduced a pre-empty home inspection that is completed before advertising a property. This prevents properties being advertised too early, especially when major works are required.

"When submitting an online form, I didn't really know what to expect next."

A range of eform submission messages have been updated to give clear advice on next steps and realistic response timescales.

646

compliments made

26

service improvements identified



Identifying service improvements is an important part of the feedback loop and shows that Berneslai Homes really wants to listen and learn.

Making a positive difference in your communities

Community Buildings

New technology – introduced digital noticeboards in the Independent Living Schemes to display news and safety information in reception areas.

Health and wellbeing – supporting residents and community groups to take part in social activities and events across all schemes, with over 2,500 events each year ranging from coffee mornings and bingo to gentle exercise and craft classes.

Supporting community groups – supporting 13 volunteer-managed community centres across Barnsley, enabling buildings to be managed by volunteers and used by local communities.

Independent Living Schemes review – 56 residents across 11 independent living schemes shared their feedback and recommendations include:

- Review the scheme manager role for consistency and consider adding responsibilities such as tenancy sign-ups, welfare checks, and low-level tenancy management.
- Involve residents in shaping the scheme manager role.
- Explore increased support for tenants who may be willing to pay an additional service charge.
- Improve communal spaces and offer a range of social activities.
- Review usage of standalone community centres and laundries.



Working with Barnsley Hospital on 'Healthy Homes'

Barneslai Homes is working closely with respiratory nurses at Barnsley Hospital to improve the living conditions and health of children with asthma. Nurses support families to fill in the 'Healthy Homes' checklist to identify issues in the home such as damp and mould that could make respiratory symptoms worse, before passing on the information directly to Property Services to address any urgent repairs.



Can Do Crew

Volunteers from across Berneslai Homes together with tenants and partners including Jewson Partnership Solutions and Ideal Heating, have made a real difference to the local community with projects including clean up days on the estates, supporting chosen charity BIADS, helping out at Autism Allotments in Thurnscoe, and gardening and tidying at the independent living schemes. If you have an idea or suggestion for a project that the Can Do Crew could take on, simply contact the engagement team with some information including the location and nature of the project, as well as your contact details by emailing communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk



Saying thank you on Yorkshire Day

Berneslai Homes marked Yorkshire Day on Thursday 1 August by celebrating the tenants, leaseholders, and residents who make a positive impact in their communities. Chief Executive Amanda Garrard and members of the community engagement team spent the day surprising those who have gone above and beyond, recognising their efforts with Yorkshire-themed gifts during 'Thank you Thursday'.

Barnsley College academy

The Berneslai Homes academy opened at Barnsley College's CUBE building at Honeywell campus. It's a vibrant and inspiring space as part of the employer-led partnership giving students access to more high-quality education and training, and more opportunities to experience the world of work within the housing sector.



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Romanian

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