

# Customer Panel

## Lettings Policy Review

### Wednesday 6 November 2024



It's been 6 months since we launched the new Barnsley Council Lettings Policy and we wanted to share our reflections. We invited tenants and applicants into Gateway Plaza on Wednesday 6 November to meet members of the Lettings Team and share their thoughts on how we're delivering the policy.

We invited people on the waiting list as well as involved tenants and anyone else who wanted to come along. We had 22 people attend and give their views on the Lettings Policy. We asked four questions and here is a highlight of the answers we were given.

#### 1a) What information would you expect to receive if you are thinking of joining the waiting list?

- Provide good information.
- Manage the customers expectations - be transparent in the likelihood of getting properties before filling out application forms.
- Show pictures of examples of properties we are letting out through pictures/emails etc so that they know what to expect.
- Not everyone is online, make information more accessible; utilise notice boards, drop in centres, face to face appointments etc.
- Explain on the website about family details, what kind of documentation can they provide?
- Information on how to apply, and if they would qualify for a property.



#### 1b) How can we dissuade people with no need from applying?

- Be honest with applicants from the start and manage customer expectation.
- Provide an approved list of housing providers and this available and easy to access. Make sure it is easy to read with bullet points and sign posting.
- Be consistently realistic with applicants.
- Be honest about the criteria and consistently provide alternative options.
- Make it clear from the beginning what stops you from going on the list.
- Share more information regarding the situation, for example, realistic waiting times, what will be offered, who will and who won't be offered properties.
- Provide clearer communication.

## 2. What would you like to be informed of once you are on the register?

- A review period more often
- Progress updates to be more often
- Help and support in providing required evidence
- Let people know how many people are in their banding, review this every 6 months and keep applicants informed.
- Tailored housing advice based on banding/priority.
- Manage expectations on the lowest bands.
- Be open and honest
- Be transparent on how much work needs doing in a property.
- Share information more frequently, for example, what happened the previous months regarding lettings, provide statistics as to how many homes were let etc.
- Be transparent with timeframes.
- Provide alternatives to online
- Face to face appointments for support in filling out applications.
- Improve the quality of adverts. The more information the better, for example, floor space plan of properties so those bidding are aware.

## 3. We allocate properties to those with the highest housing need, this means it can be difficult to rehouse some current tenants. What's your views on a quota system for transfer applicants?

A quota system is where a proportion of allocations would be made only to applicants who are already Berneslai Homes tenants.

Overall, most of the people attending agreed that the process we currently have in place is the right one. That properties should be let on a need over want basis, though some did say it could be argued that it would be subject to area.



What Berneslai Homes are currently doing is the right approach.



It has to be based on 'need' not 'want'.

#### 4. What's essential for a home to be lettable?



The above diagram represent views from Customer Panel attendees when asked what's essential for home to be lettable.

# DID YOU KNOW



In August 2022 there were 9324 people on the housing register. In November 2024 there's 5059. This is 54% reduction.

We have let 401 properties in the last 6 months



In 2023/24 30% of 2 bed houses and 17% of 3 bed houses were under occupied. Under the new policy there have been no 2 or 3 bedroomed houses let under occupancy.

We have only let 3 four bedroom properties so far this year



In August 2022 there were 303 people in Band 1. In November 2024 there's 145. That's a 52% decrease.



Before the new Lettings Policy was introduced there were 800 owners on the list. There are now 113.

The average waiting time for a Band 1 applicant since the new Lettings Policy was introduced is 135 days.

8 out of 39 transfer applicants in Band 1 would free up a property type we need for other priority applicants.



## NEXT STEPS

We will consider feedback as we review our lettings service offer and provide information with the council. Its still early days and we have committed to review the policy once its been in place a year and work with the council to check and respond to any issues arising.

You can view our Lettings Policy by clicking the link [here](#)

Thank you to all of those who attended and gave their views.

We hope to see you at the next Customer Panel on Thursday 20 February 2025.

If you would like further information on how to get involved, or wish to attend a Customer Panel in the future, please email: [communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk](mailto:communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk)