

Customer Panel

Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Awaabs Law

Thursday 21 March 2024



On Thursday 21 March we held a Customer Panel in Gateway Plaza. Tenants were invited to come along and give their views on our Repairs and Maintenance Policy. The tenants who attended were asked questions around the policy and their thoughts on Awaabs Law.

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Tenants attended this meeting

Did you find the Repairs Policy easy to read?

- It is easy to read, but a little long.
- A summary sheet would be useful, highlighting important points.
- An infographic version would be useful.
- Individual headings are good, it makes things clear.
- A video version on the website would be great.
- Simple bullet points and links would make it easier to read.
- No jargon to make it easier to digest.

Does the policy cover what you expected it to, is there anything missing?

- The timescales for repairs are buried in the policy and don't stand out.
- The priorities could be colour coded to make them stand out.
- It needs more visuals such as pie charts or diagrams.
- An information leaflet to manage expectations may be beneficial, including the categories of repairs and what falls into each one.
- It does not explain who the repairs hotline is or anything about the out of hours service.
- There is no mention what repairs the tenants are responsible for and what BH are responsible for, this needs to go in, listing individual items, i.e. fencing, bath, plugs etc.
- A pictorial guide for logging repairs would be useful.
- The damp and mould section needs to be made more clear to manage expectations and highlight the health implications to tenants.
- No mention of vulnerabilities and the support BH offer.
- A summary version could be included in the new tenant pack for information.
- Poster put up in community centres with a summary version of the policy.



Awaabs Law

We shared the impact of the recent Awaabs Law consultation at the Customer Panel, which will require us to respond to customers' requests in relation to potential hazards in their homes within specified timeframes.

The Government website states:

"Everyone deserves to live in a home that is decent, safe and secure. Awaab's Law, which was introduced in the landmark Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, requires landlords to investigate and fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes....The new rules will form part of a tenancy agreement, so that tenants can hold landlords to account by law if they fail to provide a decent home."

Under Awaabs Law, the proposal in their current format means that we would have to reduce other aspects of the service. What do you think we could reduce?

- Grass cutting but this is by a Service Level Agreement.
- Look at priorities and decide what is least important.
- Address scaffolding costs, look at the time it is left up when a job is completed.
- Could anything on the painting programme be moved to tenant responsibility?
- Assess provision on fencing. Educate tenants to repair and restore fencing.
- If a kitchen unit is in a decent condition could the door fronts be replaced rather than the whole unit?
- In relation to bathrooms if there is only one item that fails decency should that just be replaced rather than the whole suite?
- Could repair times be extended?
- Get repairs right the first time.
- Better communication so tenants know when to expect an operative calling and not sending 2/3 people for the same job.
- Poor communication costs money.
- Better allocation of jobs to operatives.
- Increase tenancy visits to pick up on repairs so they are not all reported at once.

Awaabs Law states that damp and mould must be investigated in set timescales. It proposes that the new legal requirement for social landlords to investigate the hazards are within 14 days, start fixing within 7 days, and make emergency repairs in 24 hours. Those landlords who fail can be taken to court, where they may be ordered to pay compensation to tenants.

Do you have any thoughts on how we can gain access to 'No access' properties?

- Have a dedicated team of workers to gain entry out of hours or at weekends.
- Educate tenants in the importance of access.
- Replicate the methods and powers used for gas servicing no access.
- More emphasis to be given to new tenants in relation to what the procedures are when reporting damp and mould.
- Better records kept in relation to tenants, on the best method of contact and times to visit, next of kin and a buddy system.
- An alternative contact number in case the tenant is bed ridden or unwell.
- Look at introducing continental shifts.
- Refresh and capture contact details on a regular basis.
- Ensure the tenants knows how serious non access is.
- Put a notice on the door saying we have visited and you need to call us urgently.
- Should access be enforced, police attendance.
- Need to be firm when tenants call about non access.
- Produce a video on non access.
- A monthly voucher draw for first time access.

Next steps

Thank you for all your feedback. We will work with officers and tenants to consider the points you have raised, and amend the policy accordingly.

We look forward to seeing you at the next Customer Panel.

Date for your diary

The next Customer Panel will be held on:

- Monday 24 June 2024

If you'd like any more information on how to get involved please email:

communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk