



# Tenant Scrutiny Panel report

Tenant satisfaction with communal areas

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**Signed off by Tenant Scrutiny Panel:** Thursday 2 October

**Signed off by Executive Management team:** November 2025

**Signed off by Customer Services Committee:** November 2025

**Publicly available:** June 2026

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## **1. About the report**

The report will share the findings of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and their assessment of customer satisfaction gathered from direct contact with tenants that pay the service charge for communal areas. The report will include the recommendations from the panel in relation to their findings and agreed actions from service leads.

## **2. Why the panel chose the project**

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel were presented with the TSM report in March 25 and asked to consider the results, highlighting any areas requiring a further investigation. The results of the 24/25 TSM survey identified a drop in customer satisfaction in relation to communal areas.

The TSM measure (TP 10 communal areas are clean and maintained) and results are detailed below:

- *Housemark benchmark is 64%*
- *result for 23/24 were 66% (2% above the benchmark)*
- *result for 24/25 was 62% (a decrease of 4% from the previous year)*

24% of the TSM survey respondents claimed to live in a building with what they perceived to have a communal area. Amongst this group 62% were satisfied compared to 27% that were dissatisfied.

As there is no shared definition for a communal area within the survey, the panel were keen to explore this further, as each panel member had their own interpretation as to what a communal area consisted of.

## **3. How tenants were involved in the project**

A new, six-member scrutiny panel was formed on Tuesday 11 March 25 with four new members. Ten meetings were held to complete the project.

Several meetings were held onsite at buildings with communal areas - e.g. independent living schemes (ILS). This provided the panel members with a clearer understanding of the variety of communal areas Berneslai Homes are responsible for within the scope of the project.

With the support of the Customer Engagement team, the panel agreed the best approach would be to survey all tenants who pay a service charge on top of their rent, as these tenants would be more prone to utilising our buildings and their communal areas.

On completion of the draft survey, the panel identified that in order to gain a reflective look at tenant satisfaction with our communal areas, bespoke surveys would be needed for each building, as the communal areas are different and therefore affect the tenants' responses.

The Customer Engagement team supported the panel to design bespoke surveys for:

- independent living schemes
- tenants who could access a community centre and laundry room
- tenants who could access an independent laundry room

Once the surveys were developed and signed off, the panel commissioned the Community Engagement team to undertake the surveys on their behalf. This would ensure tenant / panel member confidentiality and raise the Community Engagement teams' profile across the borough.

Panel members provided 30hrs of volunteer time in total per member.

#### 4. Scoping of the project

- Panel discussion around communal areas and Berneslai Homes not having their own corporate description of this.
- ILS site visits for panel members to gain a better understanding of Berneslai Homes' communal areas.
- Designed bespoke surveys including images for each ILS / community centre with laundry room / standalone laundry room.
- Requested NEC reports to identify all properties that paid a service charge to determine which properties we had to visit.
- 100% door knock.
- Hard copies of all surveys with a pre-paid enveloped were left at all properties with 'no answer'.

#### 5. Summary of findings

Communal area building type	Number of tenants engaged with	Responses	%
Flats	276	114	41%
ILS	361	162	45%
Community centres	575	276	48%

Laundry	150	68	45%
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Common themes of issues identified across all property types (ILS, community centres with laundry room, standalone laundry room, medium rise buildings):

- overgrown weeds on entry walkways
- insufficient bins provided for recycling
- misuse of bins (not being used properly)
- biffa bins lids too heavy for tenants
- entrance doors not staying open long enough for disabled access
- entrance doors staying open too long creating a security risk
- unclean and stained carpets
- heating remains constantly on in buildings (e.g. ILS / community centres)
- some scooters stores are not large enough for demand
- parking of scooters affects space available
- frequent breakdown of laundry equipment and timescales of repairs
- hygiene issues with use of laundry machines
- policing of laundry rotas
- access to standalone laundry rooms

For a full breakdown of the feedback from each individual building type please contact the Community Engagement team:

[communityengagementteam@berneslaihomes.co.uk](mailto:communityengagementteam@berneslaihomes.co.uk)

We can provide building specific feedback or the complete version of the report.

## 6. Conclusion

Overall satisfaction with communal areas is high across all the independent living schemes, laundry rooms and community centres. There are pockets of dissatisfaction at a scheme level which can be addressed by the development of bespoke action plans.

Going forward the insight will allow us to run a survey annually and develop more targeted consultation (e.g. communicating with tenants who have access to a standalone laundry room). As previously mentioned, it will also inform the development of bespoke plans for each facility, as the data captured has highlighted areas for improvement on a scheme basis.

The results point to a lack of consistency across the schemes in relation to satisfaction across communal areas, this could be due to the fact there isn't a corporate definition of a communal area or that the service standards are not communicated and consistently delivered.

Satisfaction of grounds maintenance differs across the schemes, laundries in some areas are only used by tenants in the winter months for the drying facilities, and residents in some schemes don't use their communal room.

Tenants did question the service charge as they don't use the facilities.

The Community Engagement team identified that the initial approach within ILS conducting face to face surveys as part of this project was providing good information and yielded a high proportion of responses. After sharing this with the Scrutiny Panel it was agreed to roll out this approach across all tenancies identified as part of the project. The Community Engagement team identified that these responses seemed to contradict the results of the TSM survey because satisfaction with communal areas across the sites was high. Therefore, we have concluded that dissatisfaction is coming from the wider tenant population in relation to the external, environment (e.g. grassed areas/open spaces) and would recommend that this is followed up by a further piece of local mapping.

## 7. Action plan (recommendations)

Observation	Recommendation for improvement	Berneslai Homes response	Timeframe for completion
<p>Berneslai Homes do not have a corporate description of a communal area within independent living schemes, community centres with laundry rooms, standalone laundry rooms.</p>	<p>Berneslai Homes adopts the following description: Communal areas are internal and external spaces within a building or property where you, your household and/or visitors are permitted to go. These areas are maintained by Berneslai Homes, and residents have access to them as part of their tenancy or lease agreement. This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stairwells</li> <li>• corridors</li> <li>• landings</li> <li>• understairs entrances</li> <li>• lifts</li> <li>• rubbish chutes</li> <li>• shared balconies</li> <li>• access paths and ramps</li> <li>• drying areas</li> <li>• bins areas</li> <li>• scooter stores</li> <li>• toilets</li> <li>• laundry rooms</li> <li>• community room / social room</li> <li>• external seating / garden areas</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed</b></p>	<p>Feb 26</p>
<p>The panel identified properties that have communal areas but are not on the cleaning programme for Berneslai Homes and are therefore tenants' responsibility.</p>	<p>A follow up (mini) project to scrutinise these tenants' satisfaction using the same format.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b> Community Engagement team to facilitate and support. This additional scrutiny</p>	<p>Feb 26</p>

		project will give the organisation a clear understanding of overall tenant satisfaction with all our communal areas.	
Some standalone laundries are not used or used very little and there have been issues raised regarding access (e.g. no DDA access).	Carry out an options appraisal on all laundry sites.	<b>Agreed</b> Community Engagement team to facilitate and complete. To note, this is already planned in for Berneslai Homes.	June 26
A variety of issues raised from all ILS backed up with an interest from tenants to help to address some of these issues (e.g. overgrown weeds, bin use, heating, scooter stores laundry machine use).	Explore the possibility of launching ILS tenant forums to oversee the action plan and carry out spot checks, networking with other schemes.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	June 26
Dissatisfaction from tenants regarding the lack of activities within the communal areas / community centres. Some have more going off than others which tenants are aware of.	Explore the provision of communal lounge activities across the schemes (not the ILS).	<b>Agreed</b> Community Buildings team.	June 26
Tenants expressing an interest to provide feedback and improvement suggestions more regularly.	This project has provided us with the data to enable us to run this consultation of communal areas in the future.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	Ongoing
A lack of a shared understanding of service standards in relation to communal areas.	Refresh and communicate the standards in relation to communal areas to manage residents' expectations.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager supported by Communications team	June 26

A lack of consultation regarding the installation of the interactive noticeboards in the communal areas of the ILS, including the siting of the screens in relation to accessibility. A shared lack of knowledge of how to use them and what should be displayed on them.	Develop a plan to train residents on how to use the boards and revisit the location/height of installation to ensure they are accessible for tenants with mobility problems. Agree with tenants what they would like to see on the boards, bespoke to each scheme.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	June 26
A lack of understanding from tenants regarding the service charges.	Develop/review the ILS welcome pack. Manage customer expectation regarding the service charge they are committing to. Work with NMO's housing coaches to ensure this is completed. Clear breakdown of the service charge should be communicated on sign up and in the advert.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	June 26
The insight data (please see table in summary of findings) is showing us that overall, tenants are satisfied with communal areas. Therefore, the assumption is dissatisfaction is around the external environment (grassed areas / land locked areas).	To complete external environmental mapping exercise in partnership with NMTs to determine where the dissatisfaction is present regarding communal areas.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	ongoing
Machines in laundries are open to abuse or misuse, leading to technical faults, by incorrect usage.	Signage in laundry rooms outlining the correct way to use the machines in the laundry and taking consideration for other users.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings supported by the Communications team.	April 26
Laundry timetables are not adhered to.	Review laundry timetables and the policing of.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	Ongoing
Heating is on 24/7 across the communal areas	Regulate the heating to reduce consumption / cost. Some buildings are empty but are constantly heated even throughout the summer months.	<b>Agreed</b> Community buildings manager	Ongoing
Numerous issues in relation to waste management, bin collection service (acknowledge this is out of scope).	Review bin provision at independent living schemes and high-rise buildings. Develop a comms campaign to raise tenant awareness of tenant responsibilities.	<b>Agreed</b>	April 26

## **8. Review**

The review of recommendations and actions will start in April 2026.