



## Customer Panel October 21

### What's changed

It was with great excitement that we welcomed back our fabulous customers to the first face to face Customer Panel in nearly 2 years, and it didn't disappoint!

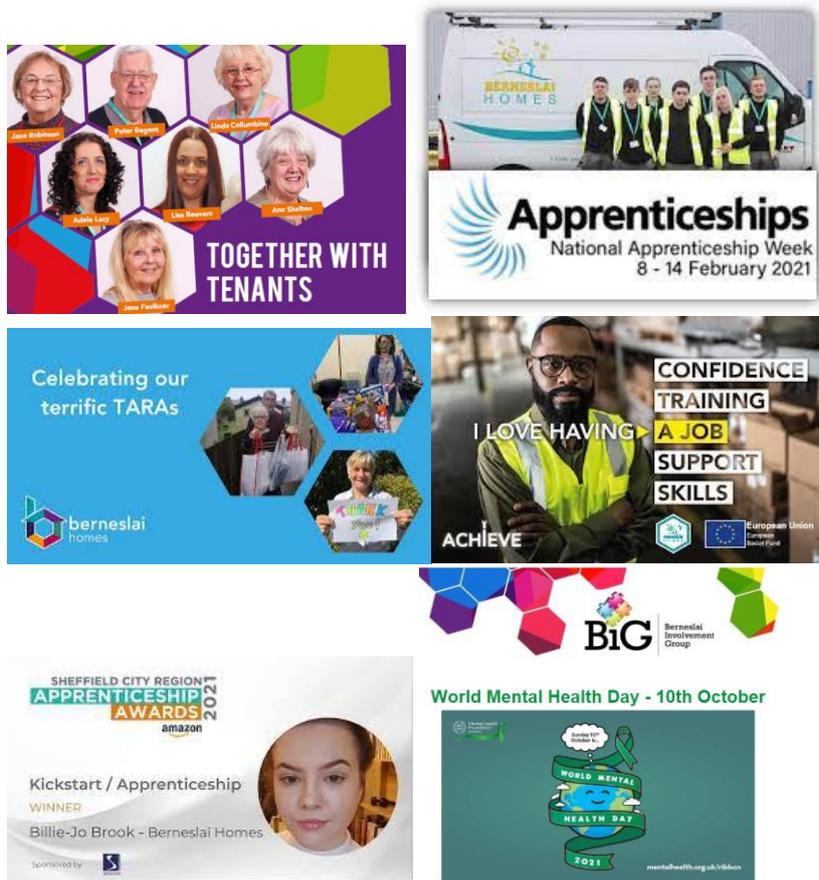
Due to Covid guidelines, we only invited our involved customers, and we had a great turnout of 21! It was amazing to actually meet face to face again after such a long time.

Its fair to say it's been a year like no other and we have seen some changes in the world of social housing. Amanda Garrard, Chief Executive, ran us through some of the changes, just take a look below, there has been a fair few!



But we've gone above and beyond supporting our customers and staff, here's just a glimpse of the initiatives we've been involved in;

We've developed our Annual Report along with the Tenant Voice Panel including a Tenants Charter, that are a set of promises on how we will deliver our services, from a customer point of view.



We've also seen changes of our Governance structure, just take a look below at our Board;



We've made big changes to our organisational culture and leadership, here are our new values, or as we call them the 3 Cs!



We have some excellent partnerships, ensuring we deliver services that meet the needs of our diverse communities;



### What's changed for you?

We know the last year or so has been tough and that customers' expectations have changed, so it's really important that we understand how the pandemic has affected your thoughts around engagement.

We asked attendees a series of questions and here they are below, with the responses given.

#### **We asked**

How have the last 18 months been for you, as customers?

#### **You replied**

You were extremely impressed with the way that Berneslai Homes kept tenants informed about the changes to service delivery, so that's great to hear!

It's fabulous that as involved tenants, you gave us the opportunity to have our say in the response to Covid, as we felt part of the decision-making process

The Repairs service was very effective and reassuring

Communication has been difficult, but that is understandable as you had to change to meet the demands of lockdown

Contact and interaction with Berneslai Homes has been a lot lower, face to face, as some tenants have taken to doing things online, and in some instances this was the only way to get involved

Some customers had concerns about the online offer and not being able to take an active role in their local communities, but others had taken part on the online offer

You adapted quickly ensuring customers and staff were safe, all in all you did a good job

It wasn't easy to communicate with Officers, as they were all working from home, we feel that this may have had a detrimental effect on communication as a whole

It has strengthened our local communities, as we all pulled together

The App was used as a tool for reporting repairs, but it didn't work well for one person.

Using the Telephone was the method for keeping in touch.

Covid effected the local TARA groups as they couldn't meet, and people were staying in

You offered a great range of digital services, but there are still a lot of tenants that don't want to go down that route

### **So what?**

**It's great to hear you felt reassured and confident with our approach to Covid and that you were pleased with the Repairs service. We completely understand that it has been a difficult time for some customers, and for whatever reason some involved customers didn't wish to engage with us on a digital platform, that's fine, and we were there to support them in different ways. We are currently reviewing our App, so we hope you like the improvements we've come up with, which we will be sharing with you at a later date. Communication seemed to be an issue and we will be exploring this further. Don't worry about the TARAs not meeting during lockdown, as we will be working with the TARAs to develop future plans.**

### **We asked**

Did you attend any of the online sessions we held such as the Customer Panel, Your Community Your Say and what are your thoughts on them?

### **You replied**

#### **You had mixed views on this;**

You didn't get any information about the local meetings, it was just sent to a few individuals, so some members had no idea they were taking place

The Your Community Your Say weren't advertised widely enough

It differed from area to area, so some areas missed out

We liked the Customer Panels, especially over zoom

The local meetings served a purpose online and were really good

The online meetings didn't generate a lot of debate

Meetings didn't have the human touch, or social interaction

Some customers had been given the kit to join meetings and preferred Zoom, but a lack of IT stopped others from joining in

### **So What?**

**We will take your comments on board, as we are currently reviewing our Local Engagement Offer. We will continue to work with the TARAs to ensure they are online, if they wish to be and have the honest conversations with them about how they would intend to represent their local community in the future.**

### **We asked**

Thinking about the future, tell us your thoughts on local engagement, have we got it right, what can we improve on, what would make it easier for you to get involved?

### **You replied**

More face-to-face meetings would encourage people to get involved.

You liked the mixture of face to face and online sessions

More and improved representation at TARA meetings, with a consistent approach taken throughout the Housing Management Teams, as its imperative for a good working relationship and plans can be developed together that benefit the whole community

You requested a re vamp of the Your Community Your Say meetings, as they don't work in some areas. They have little or no tenant representation.

The Walkabouts need more opportunity for involvement, rather than just having the option to attend, we would like to see issues fed in prior to the session.

In West of the borough customers reported that they don't often see a HMO in the area, and that's a missed opportunity for engagement

You told us that communication needs improving at a local level and the number of opportunities increased. Opportunities for people that may not want to get involved in a group, but would be willing to give their views as individuals

You wanted us to address the issue of people not having IT to get involved at a local level

You had concerns that YCYS groups don't work in most areas, and that we should think about how local engagement could change

## **So what?**

**We will bring back face to face meetings where it is safe to do so, and also offer a hybrid approach, as we know not everyone is ready to meet in person again.**

**We are reviewing our approach to local engagement and this includes the Estate Walkabouts and the Your Community Your Say groups. TPAS are on site meeting with a group of engaged customers, so we will feed any recommendations into the process.**

**During lockdown we offered all the TARAs the opportunity to get online by providing kit and training and we will continue to support the TARAs, including conducting a review of the current Constitution and looking at the development of TARA action plans.**

## **We asked**

Our Customer Panel has been going for many years, and we think its time we shook it up a bit. It's great that we have a steady membership, but have we got the format right?

## **You replied**

You'd like to see the Panel meetings move around the borough, meeting more often but in different areas, but have a main one once a year

You like the name, Customer Panel, as it says what it is

You didn't think it should be a fixed membership, as it would stop others from joining

You like it when guest speakers come to the event, to talk about different topics

You had mixed views on whether they should be face to face or online, could you use the hybrid approach?

## **So What?**

**We will continue to review the Customer Panel model and not restrict the membership. We will consider having guest speakers and survey the current membership for their thoughts on future agendas.**

## **We also wanted your views on the Call Centre**

### **We asked**

How long do you think is reasonable to wait before your call is answered? 1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes, 5 minutes or longer?

### **You replied;**

1 minutes often feels like 10 minutes when you are stuck in a queue

Staffing should be flexible at busy periods, such as a Monday morning or in the winter when boilers may require fixing

The welcome message is far too long and that's frustrating

The wait time is far too long

The sooner the better

Make it clear how long customers will be waiting, not by saying you are xx in the queue, customers can then decide if they are prepared to wait or not

### **We asked**

Do you agree that we should vary performance according to peak times and numbers of calls in the queue? For example, if you call us between 8am and 9am we'll answer in xx minutes, and if you call us between 10am and 12pm, we'll answer in xx minutes?

### **You replied**

You agreed with this, as it will help manage call volume and customer expectations

### **We asked**

At what point should we change the waiting message to advise of long waits? Where the queues are longer than 5 minutes, 10minutes or 15 minutes?

### **You replied**

You agreed that to manage expectations and give customers the choice, it's should be changed as soon as you are aware that there is a queue forming.

### **We asked**

Do you think we should reduce our opening hours for repairs, to be consistent with other enquiries? Currently 8am – 8pm and 8am – 1pm on Saturday? If so, Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm or 8am – 6pm? This won't affect emergency calls

### **You replied**

No, you didn't like this idea, as it's taking away the flexibility of making a call and will only benefit the Call Centre

It may push people to report repairs online

You would need to analysis the data on this before deciding

### **So What?**

**We will feed all your views into the Task group and keep you informed of any changes made.**

A massive thanks for coming along to the Customer Panel and giving us your views, it was great to see you all in person and continue the honest and open conversations that we are proud of in Berneslai Homes!

