

How we've delivered services over the last year and what's coming up next



# Tenants at the heart of everything

Annual Report  
2023 – 2024



**berneslai**  
homes

# Introduction

An introduction from this year's editorial group

Welcome to the annual report which reviews the delivery of services from April 2023 to March 2024. It looks at what's happening now and next for tenants.

As involved tenants, we've been working with Berneslai Homes to make a difference to all tenants, making sure that your voices are heard.

Berneslai Homes has been supporting tenants with the cost of living over the last 12 months (see page 16/17). We know times are tough for everyone but there's support available. If you're worried about paying your rent, bills, or buying essentials – please talk to the teams, as they are here to help.

As tenants we understand how frustrating it is when we're waiting for repairs to our homes. We're aware that tenants are waiting for planned repairs and we'd like to reassure you that Berneslai Homes have been working hard to catch up on all outstanding repairs. You can read more about the budgets available on page 4.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 requires the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to make sure landlords provide homes that are safe, warm, and well maintained, deliver good quality services to tenants, and that they hear and respond to our voices.

Ken Taylor, the Chair of the Board, is passionate about listening and responding to the tenant voice and we're looking forward to working with him and the Board.

We hope that the Annual Report gives you an open, honest and transparent account of how Berneslai Homes is performing for us all.

Enjoy reading the report and don't forget to enter the competition to win a £50 shopping voucher.

For and on behalf of the Tenant Voice.

Data for this Annual Report was collected from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023. 1,891 tenants took part in this survey.



» **76.8%**  
Overall satisfaction with our service

» **74.9%**  
Satisfaction home is safe

» **73.8%**  
Satisfaction home is well maintained

Annual Report Editorial Group members: Roy Jones, Brian Griffin, Jane Faulkner and John Townend (back row).



## Barnsley Council Introduction

Once again Berneslai Homes and our involved tenants have worked in partnership with Barnsley Council as landlord for the Council's housing to provide all tenants with this annual report for 2023/24.

Key priorities within the Council's Plan are that our residents feel safe and that they're supported to have safe, warm, and sustainable homes. To underpin the golden thread, the Council and Berneslai Homes have worked collaboratively, with tenants, to make sure a consistent understanding of, and approach to, the post-April 2024 regulatory requirements alongside the requirements and responsibilities for building and fire safety.

Your safety is the number one priority for the Council and Berneslai Homes. We are therefore pleased to see strong performance across all areas of compliance, the investment and planned investment in additional fire safety measures and the focussed resource to proactively address issues of damp and mould and repairs work currently in progress.

There continue to be some challenges that have impacted service delivery and resourcing both locally and across the social housing sector. This report acknowledges where there is room for improvement and sets out the key areas for focus over the coming year. We look forward to working closely with Berneslai Homes and our tenants to shape efficiencies and improvements to service design and delivery making sure that the tenant voice is heard loudly and clearly acted upon.

**Sarah Clyde, Head of Strategic Housing, Barnsley Council**

# Introduction

## Making every pound count

It's important that Berneslai Homes offers value for money and we work hard to manage our finances carefully.



This is how it was spent:



**£30.3M**  
Improving homes



**£24.3M**  
Day to day repair



**£22M**  
Managing our service\*



**£8.2M**  
Interest, loans and borrowing\*\*

### \*What is it?

This includes tenancy management, supporting tenants, income collection and tenant involvement.

\*\*The borrowing costs included are funded by a capital contribution from the Housing Revenue Account reserves as the borrowing is to fund Capital Investment Programmes. These costs are not funded by rental income.



» **66%**  
of funds locally, supporting the local economy and keeping the 'Barnsley Pound'\* in Barnsley

We made over  
» **£550K**  
of efficiency savings that we can invest back into services

\*The 'Barnsley Pound' is money that stays in the borough spent on local supplies and services, and wages that are paid to employees who live locally.



**We're here to provide every tenant with a good quality, warm, comfortable, and safe home to live in. It's vital we make sure every pound we collect and every pound we spend on services counts.**

Amanda Garrard, Chief Executive

# Maintaining building safety

## Keeping tenants safe

Keeping tenants safe is our main priority. Our dedicated team work to cover all areas of legislation and compliance. They carry out regular tests and servicing in our properties including communal areas.

In 2023/24 this is how we've kept you safe:

- 11 independent living schemes now have sprinklers
- Fitted fire doors to leaseholder properties within our high rise buildings and are working with the remaining four leaseholders to get them installed
- Upgraded smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms to various properties

[Click this link](#) to watch our film to hear more about how we're working with tenants and leaseholders on building safety issues.

In 2023-24 we carried out:



(\*) Electrical inspections are 99.93% due to no access. We're working to carry out these inspections as a priority.

Our Fire Safety Officer Andy carrying out a regular fire safety inspection



In the next 12 months we'll be: Carrying out works in our three high rise buildings including:

- » Replacing communal fire doors
- » New intercom system and electrics
- » Fire detection upgrade
- » Automatic smoke ventilation within the corridors and stairwells
- » Passive fire protection to slow the spread of a fire
- » New signs
- » Digital notice boards

## Service improvement

We've appointed a Damp, Mould and Disrepair team. They're here to support you with any issues and help to reduce the number of complaints.

[Click the link](#) for advice to spot the signs of damp and mould, including useful tips and how to report it to us.

Our Damp, Mould and Disrepair team are here to support you.



If you're waiting for a repair and it becomes more urgent or a health and safety concern, please contact us today (see page 23 for contact details).

It's also important you let us into your home for a repair, visit, or safety inspection.

## Keeping properties in good repair

# Making your homes warm, safe, comfortable and fit for the future

We've been working with our contractor Pennington Choices to survey your homes. We've now carried out:

**14,901** Stock Condition surveys

**14,471** Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

We're continuing to survey the remaining homes during 2024/25. We use this information to maintain homes and buildings we manage, identify any repairs and maintenance, and develop improvement programmes.

Our Capital Investment Programme for 2023/24 delivered improvements to over 1,000 properties, making homes more energy efficient and reducing energy bills. Where necessary, replacements were made to:

- boilers
- energy efficient LEDs
- loft insulation
- cavity wall insulation
- external wall insulation
- PVCu doors and windows

We carried out works to over **1,275 homes** costing approximately **£11.4M** in 2023-24 under the Barnsley Homes Standard. This makes sure that decency is maintained.

### Service improvement

Rising costs because of higher inflation rates has caused materials and supply chain prices to rise, impacting on our ability to carry out planned repairs and replacements. We've also improved communications with tenants awaiting a planned repair or programmed replacement. To keep you updated on the progress we'll:

- Inspect your home within our target of 28 days of us deciding it's a planned repair or replacement
- Write to tenants within 14 days of this visit, with a confirmation of the works and an estimated completion date
- Keep tenants updated with the progress of the repair or replacement, including where there are changes to estimated completion dates
- Contact the tenant to make arrangements when we're ready to complete

In the next 12 months we'll be:

- » Rolling out the Repairs First project, delivering an easy-to-use online reporting option so you can report and track repairs online
- » Working with Barnsley Council to develop a fully costed 30-year investment plan
- » Working with Energise Barnsley on 1,000 properties to fit Solar Panels (over the next 18 months).
- » Delivering retrofit works to up to 100 properties

» **75.1%**  
Satisfaction with overall repairs service

» **75.5%**  
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

In 2023-24 we spent:

**£54.6M**  
Improving your homes and day to day repairs



I'm delighted with the recent works to make my home more energy efficient. My new rendering looks good, my home feels warmer, and my energy bills have reduced.

Mrs Watson,  
Carlton



## Respectful and helpful engagement

# Capturing your voices

Thanks to all the tenants and residents who've worked with us over the last year to help us improve services. Our team of amazing volunteers constantly challenge us.

Listening to their voices we've changed the way we do things. We've:

- Opened up the Tenant Voice meetings to a wider range of tenants and leaseholders to capture more views
- Changed the way we conduct spot checks to include an element of grounds maintenance
- Continued to be visible in the communities by increasing the engagement tours

The Scrutiny Panel have produced a report on the Adaptations Service. This includes several recommendations for improvement. We'll be working to deliver this and report back progress to the panel members shortly.

We know coming to a formal meeting isn't everyone's cup of tea, so we're offering new ways for tenants to proactively get involved.

The Check it Challengers programme offers a new way to get involved from home at a time to suit you.

[Click the link here to sign up today.](#)



**We want to make sure that tenants are at the heart of all we do. Working on behalf of Barnsley Council, we'll provide a range of opportunities to capture the views of all tenants. Every touch point is an opportunity for tenants to get their voices heard.**

Ken Taylor,  
Chair of the Board

In the next 12 months we'll be:

- » Rolling out the Check it Challengers programme
- » Launching Customer Champions, eyes and ears at a local level!
- » Delivering our Customer Engagement and Insight Strategy
- » Developing and delivering our estate based action plans

» **59.6%**

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

» **76.9%**

Satisfaction that landlord treats me fairly and with respect.



Every tenant matters, every tenant has a voice, and we want to hear yours! We're here to listen, understand, and respond. Our team have plenty of opportunities to get your voice heard.

To find out more, email: [communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk](mailto:communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk)

# Improving employment and skills

## Helping tenants into work

During 2023, our ACHIEVE programme continued to help and support tenants who were unemployed or not in education or training. It helped them to overcome barriers, access education or training, and gave them the skills and confidence to gain employment. The programme delivered by our Tenants First team in partnership with Barnsley Council's Employment and Skills team, ended in December 2023. In its last 12 months it helped:



Our new Ambition programme is now helping more tenants.

### Case Study

Roan graduated two years ago from University. He's recently received help from our Ambition team. He came to us for help to get some real life work experience to add to his CV and improve his chances of employment. He spoke to our coach Freya about his interest in film and digital marketing. Freya helped Roan gain some work experience with the Berneslai Homes' comms team this summer.

### Grow your ambition!

If you or your family are currently unemployed or economically inactive then our Ambition coaches can help. [Click the link](#) to find out more and email [workandskills@berneslaihomes.co.uk](mailto:workandskills@berneslaihomes.co.uk) to register your interest.

In the next 12 months we'll be:

- » Delivering our bespoke Ambition programme to continue to support tenants who are not in employment or training
- » Looking at how we can continue to deliver the Ambition programme past 2025
- » Reviewing our office based apprenticeships to increase the number at Berneslai Homes

### Our apprentices

We're proud that our apprenticeship programme has a strong track record of building a better future for local people. We currently employ 17 apprentices and host five displaced apprentices through Enable Futures. Three of our apprentices have secured employment with us.

[Click the link](#) to watch our film showing our apprentices past and present sharing their stories.



Our Ambition coaches Freya and Dani are here to support you

Visit our website [www.berneslaihomes.co.uk](http://www.berneslaihomes.co.uk) for further information on our Ambition programme, apprenticeship programme, or to sign up to our job alerts.



## Responsible neighbourhood management

# Working together to improve homes and estates

We provide a high quality service, making sure your estates are safe and happy places to live.

Our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team work in partnership with the council's Safer Neighbourhood Service and South Yorkshire Police to deal with ASB effectively across the borough. The team address and manage community tensions that ASB, crime, and nuisance can cause so you can live in your home without stress and fear.

Our Neighbourhood Officer Robert along with partners recently received the South Yorkshire Police Barnsley District Awards, Outstanding Problem Solving Award for their effective work. The award was for their innovative ways of tackling ASB on an estate to tackle county lines gangs, drug use and drug dealing.



**If you don't think Berneslai Homes or a partner agency has dealt with ASB you've reported effectively, then you can request an ASB case review. Visit our website to find out more.**

In the next 12 months we'll be:

- » Introducing our Good Neighbour Policy and Agreement, to make sure we resolve any negative behaviours early.
- » Introducing our Reporter Contract, a formal agreement of how we keep reporters of ASB updated, through their preferred way of communication.



### Service improvement

We've listened to your feedback about our approach to ASB and have made the following changes over the last 12 months:

- Reviewed the ASB Policy and given staff refresher training
- Introduced a 'Step Up' process making sure that the right people are dealing with ASB at the right time
- Reviewed and enhanced the information on our website
- Made it easier for evidence to be supplied to us through the ASB app provided during investigation
- Introduced the RESPECT line for tenants experiencing ASB. This is an out of hours external customer service from professionals who have specialist knowledge

» **59.6%**

Satisfaction landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods (see pages 20/21 to see how we're making a difference).

» **48.4%**

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

» **65.9%**

Satisfaction that communal areas are clean and well maintained

[Click the link](#) to report any issues to us, to help keep your estates clean and safe. Our four Neighbourhood teams will look into this for you and keep you updated.



# Help and support when you need it

## Supporting you through tough times

We've continued to support tenants who are struggling with the cost of living, to help them to pay their rent, bills and essential items. Our Tenants First team continue to give tenants the right support at the right time. They identify what help is needed and then tailor this to the tenant requiring support. In the last 12 months the team have helped tenants:

-  **878** helped with food vouchers
-  **763** helped with energy vouchers
-  **180** given access to foodbanks
-  **177** referred to Citizens Advice Bureau
-  **78** supported through our Family Intervention team
-  **59** housing related mental health support
-  **132** supported with a housing coach, helping them to understand what it means to have a tenancy and be able to sustain a tenancy

### £440,487

#### Hardship Fund

to help with things like energy bills, food and shopping. Here's a few words from tenants we've helped...

Thanks for your support. I'm delighted to receive Pension Credit and a back payment too.  
Mrs B, Wombwell

We've been able to stock up our cupboards and fridge and put our utilities into credit, so we're now on top with our finances. We're really grateful.  
Mr and Mrs D, Kendray

I was in between jobs so food and energy vouchers meant I didn't have to get into debt whilst i got my first pay packet.  
Mr B, Grimethorpe

The team have helped a lot with budgeting as i'm really struggling with increased costs.  
Ms T, Jump

In the next 12 months we'll be:

- » Continuing to support and advise tenants who are struggling to pay their rent and bills, to help them maximise their income.
- » Supporting and referring tenants to Citizens Advice to manage their high level debt.
- » Identifying applicants on the housing register at risk of having a failed tenancy. Providing them with skills, knowledge and confidence to have a successful tenancy.

» **£1.25M+**  
value of financial support referrals accepted helping 1,496 tenants

» **£944,405**  
benefits gain value

» **£43,819**  
funding and grants value



### Case Study: Lester

Previously homeless and unemployed, Lester was supported by the team. We're proud he's now living and working in Barnsley and is happy and settled in his new job and home. [Click this link](#) to watch Lester's story.



If you're struggling with the cost of living or paying your rent, [click this link](#) to contact the team, or call 01226 787878 for help today.

# Effective handing of complaints

## Valuing your views

It's okay to complain. We value every complaint, as it's an opportunity to listen to you, learn, put things right, grow, and improve.

Last year, we were pleased to receive the Housemark accreditation for our complaints handling service and remained compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code. However, following the national trend, we saw a rise again this year in the volume of complaints with:



Our key concerns were our ability to:

- Respond to complaints within timescales
- Resolve complaints effectively at stage 1 of the complaint process without the need to escalate to stage 2
- Quickly put learning in place, this is meaning we are receiving a higher than acceptable number of complaints about the same reasons

You can read our service improvements throughout this report.

(\*) To address these concerns. Find out what we're doing in the next 12 months on page 19.

The top three reasons for complaints were:

**Damp and mould concerns**

**Delays with planned repairs**

**Poor communication**

In the next 12 months we'll be:

- » Increasing temporary resources for the Customer Services team to help respond to complaints promptly and more effectively.
- » Running a company wide customer service training programme to enhance our Customer First culture.
- » Committed to resolving complaints at stage 1 to reduce the number escalated to stage 2.

» **43.1%**  
satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints

We received  
» **1,048**  
compliments

» **36**  
service improvements identified; some are identified in this report. [Click this link](#) to find out more.



# In your communities

Across Berneslai our teams work hard to make a positive contribution in your community. Here's a few of the fantastic projects/ events we've supported over the last year.



## Barnsley Pride

In July, we had fun attending Barnsley Pride to support our LGBTQ+ community. We're proud to be a supportive and inclusive organisation.



## Grimethorpe allotments

In Autumn, our friends at Grimethorpe Allotments put our £1,000 Ideal Heating donation to great use, growing fruit and plants to give back to the local community! Watch this space for what's growing this year!



## TARA Christmas parties

In Winter, we were thrilled to share our Stannah UK donation (\*) of £1,000 with three TARAs who were able to organise fantastic events for the community! From Christmas buffets and free raffle prizes to carolling events and visits from Santa, these gatherings brought joy to residents of Great Houghton, Carlton, and Grimethorpe.

(\*) This donation is made possible through the social value of our current stairlifts contract, with Stannah UK. It is part of their commitment to community projects. A big thanks to the team for your support.



## Hearing your voice

We continue to hold estate walkabouts with tenants and residents in each local area to keep your estates clean and tidy. We also hold Your Community Your Say meetings in your local area to discuss neighbourhood issues. [Click this link](#) for a list of events during 2024.

In the next 12 months we'll be:

» Rolling out our Can Do Crew employer supported volunteering scheme. This allows our staff to take paid time off during work hours to volunteer. It's a great opportunity which really benefits tenants, and the wider community.



## Woodhall Flats 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In March, we had a lovely celebration buffet marking the 50-year anniversary of Woodhall Flats in Darfield - one of our independent living schemes.



## Warm and welcoming spaces

In Autumn we transformed three warm and welcoming spaces. The spaces at Honeywell, Kirk View and Maltas Court Community Centres were given a makeover and some love. Thanks to teams of 32 volunteers from across Berneslai Homes, supported by seven local businesses.

This provided tenants with a warm and welcoming space if they needed it during the winter. They could also socialise, enjoy a cuppa, relax and take part in activities together. [Click this link](#) to take a look at our YouTube video to see how the Honeywell centre was transformed.

## Proud of Barnsley Awards

In November, we were pleased to sponsor the Carer of the Year award at the Proud of Barnsley Awards. Congratulations went to Zoe who is a wonderful kinship carer to her grandson.



## Watch this short film...

[Click this link](#) to see how we're creating great communities together.

## Every Voice Matters

# Engaging with tenants

Every tenant matters, every tenant has a voice!

Our Community Engagement team are passionate about working with you to listen and respond to the tenant voice. This is essential so we can deliver and develop services that are accessible, high quality and fair.

» **64.4%**  
satisfaction with being kept informed



The team have plenty of opportunities to get your voice heard. Email [communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk](mailto:communityengagement@berneslaihomes.co.uk) to find out more and get involved.



The team have worked with:

- Residents on the travellers site to improve the facilities and access to services.
- The Building Fire Safety Residents' Panel. They assisted with: the bin chutes closure in all three high rise buildings; supporting tenants in receiving the sprinkler system installation in their properties; and helping address ASB issues around waste collection and unauthorised access to the buildings. This resulted in an 'Action Day' in partnership with South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Fire Service.
- Involved tenants to deliver 14 engagement tours, capturing a whopping 222 voices. The team held important face to face conversations with tenants that wouldn't usually engage with us. All the feedback is being used to develop local area action plans to make improvements.
- Our five Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs). They continue to offer the more traditional methods of engagement. They do a brilliant job providing information, support and work on bespoke projects. This supports Berneslai Homes and benefits the local community.

## Be in it to win it!

Thanks for reading the Annual Report and we hope you've found it useful. We're giving four tenants a chance to win £50 shopping voucher.

### 1. What percentage of tenants are satisfied with repairs?

- a. 75.1%
- b. 85.4%
- c. 67.3%

### 2. How much did we spend on improving your home and day to day repairs?

- a. £69.2M
- b. £38.9M
- c. £54.6M

### 3. How many volunteers helped with the community centre makeovers?

- a. 32
- b. 59
- c. 28

### 4. One for the kids! We've hidden Berneslai Bear in our annual report. What page are they on?



To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the questions above. Send us your answers along with any feedback on the annual report (good and bad) to [comms@berneslaihomes.co.uk](mailto:comms@berneslaihomes.co.uk) before 5pm on Friday 11 October.

## Contact us

For all enquiries please phone us on:

**01226 787878**

To report non-urgent repairs, please download our App:



[For Android](#)



[For iPhone](#)

Connect with us for help and advice



Be sure we have your contact details

[Click this link](#) to create your Housing Online account, or update your information if you already have one.

# Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman encourage and assist landlords and tenants to resolve a dispute at the earliest opportunity. You can contact them regarding enquiries and advice at any point before or during the compliant process. You can also complain to the Housing Ombudsman once you've gone through both stages of our complaints procedure and are still dissatisfied.

**Complaint form:** Fill in the online complaint form at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Email:** [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Phone:** 0300 111 3000

**Write to:** Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D,  
Preston, PR2 0ET



[www.berneslaihomes.co.uk](http://www.berneslaihomes.co.uk)

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