

atHome



340 new homes for Barnet!

“The best thing about my home is that it’s a new build with enough space for my young family.” - Angur

Contacting us is a doddle!

Whether it's a general query, or raising an out-of-hours repair, you can call us on:

020 8080 6587



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GET IN TOUCH

Email TALKTOUS@BARNETHOMES.ORG

Email CUSTOMERCONTACT@OPENDOORHOMES.ORG

Call 020 8080 6587 (BARNET HOMES)

Call 020 8080 6586 (OPENDOOR HOMES)

Web BARNETHOMES.ORG | OPENDOORHOMES.ORG

Twitter @THEBARNETGROUP | **Twitter** @BARNETHOMES

Twitter @OPENDOOR_HOMES | **Twitter** COMMUNITY_TBG

Instagram @TBG_COMMUNITY1

PAY YOUR RENT OR SERVICE CHARGE

0845 356 3456 (24 hours) or barnet.gov.uk

OUR OFFICE

2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

COMPLAINTS

Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes are committed to continuously improving what we do and the way we do it as a result of feedback from customers. We aim to listen to and learn from our customers so that we can address any service failures and monitor services in a customer-focused way.

We welcome complaints and feedback from our customers to help us do this. Feedback can be given to us by email, by letter, through our websites and social media, by telephone, and in person. You can find our contact details above. Please visit barnethomes.org/complaints or opendoorhomes.org/complaints to find out more about our complaints process and about the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint-Handling Code to which we work.



I was delighted to join colleagues in celebrating the completion of the third tranche of 340 newly built homes for The Barnet Group's registered provider of housing, Opendoor Homes. You can read more about it and hear what our newest residents had to say about their homes on page five.

Since my last update to you in the Spring issue of atHome, we have set up a new Healthy Homes Team with the specific responsibility of tackling Damp and Mould in any of our properties. We are working through a comprehensive action plan to ensure that our approach to damp and mould is robust and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations for local authorities. Find out more on page 12. For the latest information or to report damp

and mould, visit barnethomes.org or opendoorhomes.org.

On page 22 you can see at a glance the incredible achievements of our Fire Safety Team over the past 18 months. We're so proud of all their efforts!

On page 16 our Neighbourhood team have included a reminder about what constitutes anti-social behaviour (ASB) and how to report it through our Customer Contact Team on 020 8080 6587. They will complete a questionnaire called an ASB triage. If the triage identifies the issue you are reporting is ASB, it will be referred to the ASB Officer who will contact you.

Our staff are always striving to put you, our customer, at the centre of everything they do. I'm pleased to introduce you to our new atHome feature 'Day in the life of' where you can read about an outstanding staff member and learn about what they do. In this issue on page 21 we meet Senior Housing Officer, Abraham Bickersteth.

We are soon launching our new Customer Care Principles to ensure our staff help you in a way that is respectful, realistic and responsive. These were developed in tandem with the new Customer Behaviour Charter, you can find out more on page 18.

Have a good summer,
Tim



Celebrating the completion of 340 new homes for Opendoor Homes

Left to right: Eamon McGoldrick Board Member of Barnet Homes, Susanna Morales Deputy Head of New Build Barnet Homes, Jeremy Arnold Opendoor Homes Board member, Nabil Shah Site Manager Hills Contractor, Cllr Ross Houston Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration, Tim Mulvenna CEO Barnet Homes, Ursula Bennion Chair Opendoor Homes, Meera Bedi, Head of Development New Build, Barnet Homes, Jamie Reynolds Hills Contractor, Derek Rust Director of Growth and Development, Barnet Homes and Sally Potvin Senior Project Manager Barnet Homes

In May, Opendoor Homes held a launch event to mark the completion of the final site in a programme of 340 newly built homes, taking the total number of homes managed by Opendoor to 700 in just six years.

Opendoor Homes Chair, Ursula Bennion said, “I want to say a big thank you to the London Borough of Barnet Council because without their support we wouldn’t be able to have achieved this. Thank you to the consultants and the development team at The Barnet Group, it’s a really impressive site. We are providing truly affordable housing and it’s lovely that we’ve got a mixture of one, two and three bedroom properties providing homes from singles to couples to families. These will be energy efficient homes, economical to run especially when we’ve got the cost of living crisis. Thank you to contractors Hill for all of the building work that they’ve done here. As for the future of Opendoor Homes, we’re looking to build more affordable houses, we want to do our bit for housing the most vulnerable in society.”

Cllr Ross Houston, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration said, “It was great to visit Basing Way Green and see the superb new homes built by Opendoor Homes. Finishing this programme is a welcome milestone. Barnet Council continue to work with Opendoor Homes to help deliver our ambitious pledge to provide 1,000 genuinely affordable new council homes.”

Meera Bedi, Head of Development (New Build), said, “We are very proud and delighted to have achieved this milestone, the team has worked really hard and it feels fantastic and is something to celebrate!”

“Before moving here I was living in temporary accommodation. Our new home feels like a palace!”

BUILDING NEW HOMES FOR BARNET

New Opendoor Homes tenant Lisa, her partner and child have just moved into their two bed apartment. Lisa said, “Before moving here I was living in temporary accommodation. Our new home feels like a palace! It’s out of this world. And we’ve got lovely neighbours. The Opendoor Homes team were so helpful and supportive.”

New resident and mum of two, Nancy said, “Before moving here I was living with my parents, then in the private rented sector for a year then was made homeless by my landlord through no fault of my own.”

“My new home is really lovely, with a nice community with a few families - I love it!”

New resident DK is a single mum with a nine month old baby. She was sofa surfing with friends and family for over a year. DK was given the keys to her new apartment a week ago and is preparing to move in, she says, “I’m really excited, it’s a good place to start life with my daughter.”

Eamon McGoldrick, Board Member of Barnet Homes said, “There’s a lot of hard work that goes into these developments including planning and reports, but from a Board Member’s viewpoint there’s so much satisfaction when you actually come to see them finished as new homes and people moving into them.”

New resident Jason with his son

New Opendoor Homes resident Jason and his son were asked what they most liked about their flat, Jason replied, “I like the ventilation system that helps to prevent damp and mould and condensation. Everything is brand new, fresh and bright, and we have a lovely balcony. They have thought of many things - outside in the car park they’ve got charging points for electric vehicles which I didn’t expect. The doors are soft close, so there’s no banging noise coming from neighbours, which means that people can live harmoniously which I think is fantastic.” His son added, “I like my bedroom it’s big enough for my toys.”

New Opendoor Homes resident Angur pictured on the front cover, has recently moved in with his partner and children. He said, “I like my flat, it’s nice, warm and cosy. The best thing about my home is that it’s a new build with enough space for my young family, and it’s much bigger than we imagined.”



Opendoor Homes Service Champion Group - update

Opendoor
Homes

In April, members of the Opendoor Homes Service Champion Group held their second meeting. The aim of these meetings is to hear about residents' lived experiences. This is important for Opendoor Homes so that we can continue ensuring that we act on their concerns and understand the improvements that we need to make.

In this meeting the Service Champions were joined by our Head of Repairs and Head of Development and presented with an overview of their services. Our staff gained valuable feedback from a customer's experience of living in an Opendoor Homes property.

We would like to thank Opendoor Homes residents Stacey, Yasmin and Elisa and new member Anita, for all their involvement.

If you are interested in attending the next meeting or receiving a copy of the meeting minutes outlining their feedback and areas identified for improvement, call Deborah Beckford on **020 8359 5307** or email get.involved@opendoorhomes.org.

As a Service Champion you will be incentivised with **£30** for every meeting you attend and will be provided with relevant training to support you in the role.

We are keen to ensure the Service Champion Group is representative of our community and supports our commitment to inclusion across gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability, and we want to encourage a diverse range of residents to join.

Opendoor Homes - paying your housing rent

Opendoor Homes recommends housing rent being paid by monthly direct debit. If you have not already signed up to paying by monthly direct debit, please get in touch and we will arrange this for you. Alternatively please check out the Opendoor Homes website at www.opendoorhomes.org and visit the '**Rent and Money**' section of the website.

Prefer to call? Please ring us on **020 8610 3538** and advise the agent that you are an Opendoor Homes customer and would like to sign up to direct debit.



Meet Barnet Homes Resident Board Member Angela Shine



How long have you lived in Barnet?

I have lived in Barnet all my life and been a Barnet Homes tenant for over 40 years.

Tell us a bit about yourself?

I am a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother (not revealing my age!) and thoroughly enjoy looking after the babies. My hobbies for relaxation include painting, reading and jigsaw puzzles. For something a bit more strenuous I enjoy gardening, which, thanks to the Barnet Homes Gardening Club, has given me even more pleasure.

How and when did you get involved in the Performance Advisory Group (PAG) which later transformed into the Resident Board?

For many years I was secretary and vice-chair of the Barnet Homes Residents Association, and was always interested in involving tenants and leaseholders with Barnet Homes.

On attending a Barnet Homes Hub meeting the idea of the Performance Advisory Group (PAG later transformed into the Resident Board) was put forward and I believed this to be an ideal opportunity for a way forward to have interaction with the wider community and Barnet Homes. This evolved over many years. The members of PAG raised issues with heads of departments, for example repairs, gas maintenance, ground maintenance and ASB and general welfare of Barnet Homes residents. In turn they had to report to PAG with strategies for ways to implement the issues and find a way forward. PAG kept an eye on these and chased up where necessary.

How has your involvement changed the way Barnet Homes works?

I believe that not only my involvement, but all the PAG members showed that we were concerned about our environment and the work done on our behalf by Barnet Homes and in return the various departments realised that, going forward, improvements had to be implemented.

What would you say to other residents who are thinking about getting involved?

I would like more of you, the residents, to get involved with Barnet Homes. It is interesting and rewarding to feel that we have a say and to see future targets come to fruition and subsequently benefit all Barnet residents because of our input.

Call recording launch in the Customer Contact Team

We recently introduced call recording for our Customer Contact Team. All calls to the Customer Contact Team will be recorded except those that concern account enquiries to ensure that we do not record calls where payments are taken.

Barnet Homes tenants and leaseholders who wish to make a payment also have the option to use the Council's automated payment line on **0845 356 3456**.

Call recording will help us to identify service issues, resolve complaints and will provide an additional quality monitoring tool which we will use to provide feedback for team members on an ongoing basis to inform training and coaching. Our Call Recording and Monitoring Policy is available on our websites, as is our Customer Privacy Policy.



It's All About You - Customer Survey

In line with the recent introduction of the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), we need to increase the level of information we hold about our tenants' protected characteristics such as ethnicity and disability. Having good information about protected characteristics will help make sure that we complete satisfaction surveys with a sample of tenants that is representative. We will also be able to consider whether some tenant groups are less satisfied than others.

Where we have gaps in your protected characteristics data we will contact you either via email or a phone call to ask you for the data that we are missing. As well as supporting the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, having good information about protected characteristics will help us tailor our communications and assistance where this is needed and check whether our services are being accessed by all tenants. If you receive an email or call

regarding this survey, please do take the time to complete it as the information you provide us on your protected characteristics is extremely important. The information you provide will be treated with confidence, stored securely and only accessed by those who need to see it. If there are any questions within the survey you do not wish to answer please chose the answer option "**Prefer not to say**" and then move on to the next question.

For information about how your personal data is processed and about your rights, please read our Privacy Policies on our websites.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!

BOOST is an employment, benefit advice, skills and wellbeing project helping Barnet residents, and is part of The Barnet Group. Since the war in Ukraine last year many refugees arrived in Barnet, and BOOST has set up a special employment project to help them.

One of BOOSTs Employment Advisors is Olesia, who herself is Ukrainian. Her post is funded by the charity World Jewish Relief (WJR) who run the Specialist Training and Employment Programme (STEP) for resettled refugees in the UK, in partnership with the Home Office.

Olesia's role is to support 50 Ukrainian resettled refugees in Barnet through a targeted employment programme that addresses the complex barriers resettled refugees face in preparing for, and ultimately finding work in the UK. The objective is to enable beneficiaries to become economically independent and self-reliant. Central to the programme is the provision of extensive and intensive personalised support.

Case Study

STEP Employment Advisor Olesia has been assisting Ukrainian refugee 'IS' into work:

'IS' is a 31-year-old Ukrainian refugee who has found a new home in Barnet. He holds a Bachelor of Design in Information Technologies and has extensive experience in retail store design, having served as the Head of Design in a retail store design company in Ukraine prior to his displacement.



Olesia explains, "When I first met 'IS' at Hendon Job Centre, he was struggling to find employment in his field and was feeling hopeless about his future in Britain. Despite these initial challenges, 'IS' was determined to succeed and make a life for himself in his new home. He actively sought out job opportunities, took on small design consulting work to make ends meet, and was unwavering

in his determination to find stability and fulfilment. 'IS' and I worked together on his job search, revising his CV to emphasise his relevant skills and experience, and tailoring it to specific job requirements, highlighting his language skills and adaptability. Our efforts paid off and 'IS' was eventually able to secure a job as a graphic designer at a digital marketing company. He has been able to use his talents to the fullest and make a positive contribution to his new society."

Lawrence Graham, BOOST Team Manager for Employment and Skills (pictured, centre) said "Since we started our joint working project with World Jewish Relief, I'm so pleased to announce that we have now managed to get funding for an additional step advisor, Oksana (pictured left) along with getting a one year extension on funding for Olesia."

STEP Employment Advisor Olesia (pictured right)



Looking for an Apprenticeship?

Interested in a career with Barnet Homes? Apprenticeships are a great way to get started. We are looking for ten people to join our successful annual apprenticeship programme to start in October. You will study for a Level 3 qualification in Housing and Property Management while working in one of our busy teams learning on the job skills and building your confidence.

Salary is £18,400 and the role is full time (four days' work, one day's study each week) for 14 months. To apply or find out more contact:

Lawrence.Graham@barnethomes.org
or **Michael.Gehr@barnethomes.org**



Good Things Foundation – BOOST Barnet Online Centre

BOOST have partnered with digital inclusion charity, Good Things Foundation, to give free data to Barnet community members through the National Databank. The National Databank, created in collaboration with Virgin Media O2, provides free mobile data vouchers to people who are struggling to afford their internet connection. BOOST is one of the organisations part of Good Things Foundation's National Digital Inclusion Network helping to ensure the free data lands in the hands of people who need it. To find out more visit: boostbarnet.org

Free broadband for Barnet residents* (Ts & Cs) apply

Barnet Council is prioritising digitally excluded areas and is working with Community Fibre (and other broadband providers) to ensure that every council home in the borough has access to high-speed fibre broadband by 2025. Find out more about Barnet's Gigabit Broadband programme at barnet.gov.uk/broadband.

Barnet Council is working with Community Fibre to offer free fibre broadband for 12 months to Barnet residents. The scheme has been set up to support Barnet residents who can't access broadband in their home.

Barnet residents can also apply for free Community Fibre, subject to availability. Find out more here: www.boostbarnet.org/?p=6803



Isobel Aptaker (pictured front row above) and the 2econd Chance team

BOOST and



2ECOND CHANCE.CO.UK
EMPOWER PEOPLE & SAVE COMPUTERS

BOOST Barnet is proud to be partnered with 2econd Chance, Residents can donate unwanted laptops or tablets (under 7 years old) at any Barnet library.

Isobel Aptaker is the Special Projects Manager at 2econd Chance, below she tells us about the charity.

2econd Chance is a not-for-profit computer recycling company based in Barnet, which provides work-based training for NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) adults and young people aged 16-25 with an Education Healthcare plan.

Unwanted desktops, laptop and tablets (up to 8 years old) are donated to us which our team of trainees work on under the guidance of our specialist staff. Our trainees are referred to us by organisations across the borough of Barnet including the job centre, MENCAP, Action for Kids and Langdon and we have recently started to deliver IT training in special needs schools. Every trainee learns how

to refurbish a laptops including how to wipe data, install windows 10, partition disks and replace RAM and hard drives. Completed machines are used to bridge the digital divide either being sold at an affordable price with a percentage being donated back into the local community through our partners. Within the first 18 months we received over 2,500 machines, built our trainee team to 40 and donated one-in-four machines to those in need.

Get in touch if you:

1. Have any unwanted laptops to donate
2. Find out more about our refurbished laptop scheme
3. Refer someone to our programme

Website: 2econdchance.co.uk

Email: info@2econdchance.co.uk

Tackling damp and mould

Addressing issues around damp and mould is one of our key priorities and we have been working hard at the Barnet Group to improve how we handle damp and mould. One of the largest changes we are making is to introduce a new “Damp and Mould Policy”, which sets out our attitude towards, and response to damp and mould in social housing in Barnet.

To make sure our approach to tackling damp and mould works for everyone, in April 2023, we opened our draft policy for public feedback through our website. The public consultation period is now over. Following your feedback, we are making the following changes to the policy:

You said:

The policy should be easy to understand, so that everyone is able to access it.

1

We did:

We reviewed the language to make the policy in as plain English. In addition, we will develop an Easy Read document that sets out how residents can report damp and mould issues, and steps they can take themselves.

You said:

The policy should be kept up to date with legislation as it is released by the government.

2

We did:

We have added the following to clause 9.5 of the policy to provide reassurance: “We will be responsive to any changes in legislation or regulation and will take this into account in how we provide a service to tackle damp and mould and how frequently we update this policy.”

You said:

The policy should provide links to further relevant policies, including the hoarding policy and responsive repairs policy.

3

We did:

We are currently developing the hoarding policy and this will be linked in once it has been developed, we have updated the policy to include a link to the responsive repairs policy.

You said:

The policy should have a flow chart to show how we respond to levels of damp and mould.

4

We did:

We keep our policies (our principles on a subject) and procedures (the detailed steps we will take to deliver our policy) separate as the way we work. Whilst this means that we do not believe it is appropriate to include a detailed flow chart of the process within the policy, we can include a high-level diagram that sets out what residents can expect.

Once these changes are finalised, we are expecting to publish this policy this summer, where it will be available on our websites.

As well as writing this policy, we are working through a comprehensive action plan - to ensure that our approach to damp and mould is robust and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations for local authorities. Our managers are meeting regularly to prioritise this area of work.

Key actions within the plan include:

Stock condition surveys:



We have surveyed more than 80% of Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes' properties, to identify instances of 'severe', 'moderate' or 'slight' damp and mould. Work is ongoing to address these issues, and we have resolved more than 85% of the severe cases.

Staff training



Staff training is being organised for colleagues across the business. Spotting damp and mould issues early and knowing how to deal with it effectively are vital to combatting the problem successfully. It is not just Repairs' colleagues who have an important part to play in this. Everyone who interacts with residents and their properties – whether on site, in person or over the telephone – can help.

New technology



We are trialling environmental sensors in at least 200 properties, to assess whether these tools can help us to address damp and mould issues.

Contact us

If you are taking steps to reduce condensation, but still find that you are having issues related to damp and mould, then the issue may be something beyond your control – such as a fault in a property e.g. leaky roof, burst pipe or faulty damp-proof coursing.

If you think your home is damp and the cause is not condensation, please email our Customer Contact Team at talktous@barnethomes.org or call us at **020 8080 6587** to arrange an inspection.

Community Awards 2023

Now's the time to start submitting your nominations for our 2023 Community Awards.

Our residents' local groups and charities in Barnet make a big difference throughout the year, and we encourage you share your stories of local heroes.

This year's categories include:

Individual Categories:

- Good neighbour - A neighbour that goes the extra mile in helping others or improving their local community
- Volunteer over 25 – A valued volunteer that goes above and beyond, investing time and energy in their community
- Volunteer under 25 – An inspirational young person who selflessly gives up their time to support their local community.

To make a nomination you can scan the QR code from your mobile device or visit the Barnet Homes or Opendoor Homes website. If you do not have access to the internet and would like to make a nomination over the phone, contact the Community Engagement Team on **020 8359 5307**.

Group Categories:

- Community Group/Resident Association - Encourages you to get involved, dazzles you with their activities, fun days, community events or advocates on your behalf or the community
- Voluntary Group or Registered Charity - Deserving of an award for their contribution to local people across Barnet
- Community Project - An innovative and outcome focused community project delivered during 2023 by a local community group or charity



Scan here

Get involved

We have a range of opportunities for Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes Residents to have their say and influence how we deliver housing services. To register your interest, you can either scan the QR codes below from your mobile device or call the Community Engagement Team on **020 8359 5307**.



Barnet Homes



Opendoor Homes

Four Million Homes – Championing the voice of tenants

Four
Million
Homes

Four Million Homes is a new and exciting independent programme of opportunities open to Barnet Homes and OpenDoor Homes tenants, providing free training, knowledge and guidance on resident rights and how to stand up for them. Funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the programme has been designed to be a catalyst for change in social housing.

Over the next two years, the programme will provide tenants with the opportunity to take part in webinars, access free training - both virtual and in person - and receive regular news from the social housing world that directly impacts residents.

All training sessions are accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing and will be published on their website to include;

- Resident Panels
- Running Effective Residents Associations
- Social Housing Legal Requirements
- Social Housing Regulatory Requirements
- Understanding Landlord Financial Model
- Options For Resident Control

As a resident you are entitled to access this programme and we encourage you to join their mailing list to receive regular updates by visiting fourmillionhomes.org or follow on **Instagram and Facebook: fourmillionhomes** or **Twitter: 4millionhomes**

Four Millions Homes appreciates that not everyone has access to the internet and are identifying other options to communicate to residents.



Your guide to Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Everyone has the right to enjoy their home and community and live peacefully alongside their neighbours. The Barnet Group is committed to helping its residents to be good neighbours and build tolerant communities. Part of how we do this is to help residents tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Anti-Social behaviour is defined by Barnet Homes as:

- Personal threats that are deliberately targeted at a particular individual or group
- Public nuisance – where an individual or group causes trouble, annoyance, inconvenience, offence or suffering to people in the local community rather than targeted at a particular individual or group
- Environmental nuisance such as graffiti, damage to buildings and structures

The following are commonly reported issues that Barnet Homes do not define anti-social behaviour as:

- General household noise, vacuum cleaner noise, washing machine noise/vibration, people walking across wooden floors whilst wearing shoes
- children playing/arguing outside
- cooking smells
- occasional events e.g. BBQs, celebrations, special occasions

If you wish to report ASB, you should call the Customer Contact Team on 020 8080 6587 who will complete a questionnaire called an ASB triage. If the ASB triage identifies the issue you are reporting is ASB, it will be referred to the Anti-social behaviour officer who will contact you to complete a more in-depth questionnaire and who will be able to advise you further.

If it is not identified as ASB, the Customer Contact Team officer will provide advice and signpost you to the relevant team where necessary (e.g. Environmental Health).

Hate crimes are any crimes that are targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice about their race, gender or people with disabilities. By reporting an incident that happens to you or even that you witness, you could be a part of preventing hate crime from escalating or happening to someone else.



**Remember: In an emergency, always call 999.
If the problem is less urgent, please call the police on 101**

Recent action taken against abuse of staff member

In a statement, Michelle Davies, Senior Regeneration Manager at Barnet Homes said, “Barnet Homes takes anti-social behaviour very seriously and does not tolerate any member of staff being subject to abuse. As an example, following a physical assault on a member of staff, legal action was taken through the courts which resulted in the tenant being evicted from their home.”

Community Safety Hubs and Ward Walks

Barnet Council has opened Community Safety Hubs as part of a range of measures to help make it easier to report crime and concerns to help people feel safer in the borough of Barnet.

Residents can anonymously report or raise concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour in their area with dedicated council officers in their local Community Safety Hub at barnet.gov.uk.

Working to make Barnet a safer place

The creation of Community Safety Hubs is one of two schemes in the council's programme to make it easier to report crime and concerns to help people feel safer. In November, the council introduced 'Ward Walks' in which councillors, council officers and Police visit local neighbourhoods to investigate reported anti-social behaviour-related issues.

The launch of Barnet's Community Safety Hubs and Ward Walks follows the publication of Barnet's Community Safety Strategy 2022- 2027, which sets out how the council will tackle issues ranging from violence against women and girls, through to anti-social behaviour and protecting those most at risk of exploitation and radicalisation.

Additional future council initiatives include investment in upgrading the borough's current CCTV system and working with residents and the Police to create action plans that tackle local street-level issues in every neighbourhood.



For more information on Barnet's Community Safety Hubs, Ward Walks and the Community Safety Strategy 2022-27 visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/community-safety

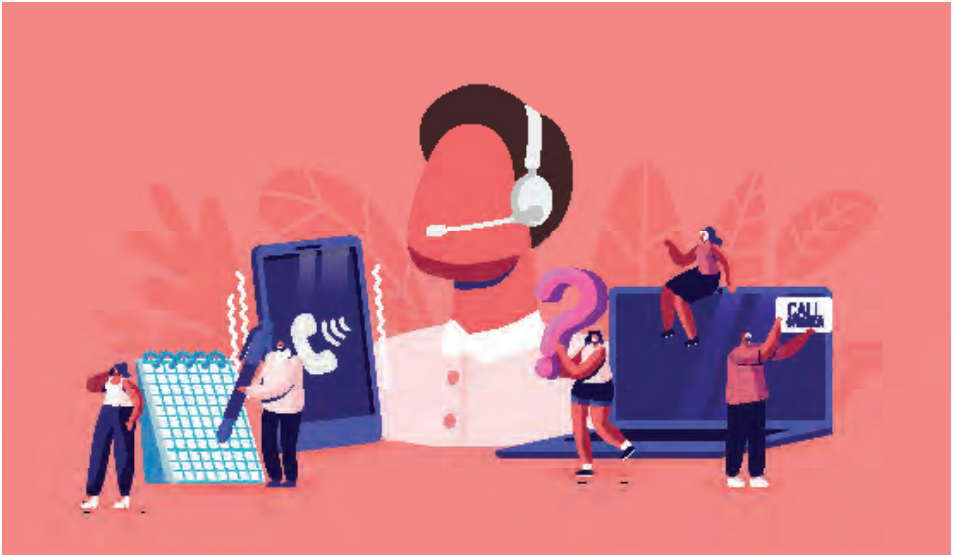


New Customer Care Principles and Customer Behaviour Charter

As part of The Barnet Group's Customer Experience Strategy (2022-24), we committed to improve how we assist customers by introducing customer care principles in place that everyone works to, along with a Customer Behaviour Charter for how we expect customers to behave when engaging with staff. To ensure that the principles and standards are focussed on the right things we engaged with both colleagues and residents to help us shape them and get sign off and we will soon be launching them.

- We aim to work together with customers to help them get what they need from us or others.
- When assisting customers, we expect our staff to help in a way that is respectful, realistic and responsive – in line with our Customer Care Principles.
- When customers are being assisted by our staff, we expect customers to engage with staff in a way that is also respectful, realistic and responsive – in line with the Customer Behaviour Charter.

We have outlined our expectations for staff and customers on the following page. The Customer Care Principles and Customer Behaviour Charter apply to all interactions between staff and customers: emails, phone calls, letters, voicemails, face to face and virtual meetings.



Customer Care Principles

We will...

Be Respectful

1. Be approachable, respectful and considerate.

We will treat customers as we would like to be treated and considerate of what customers may be going through.

2. Listen to you carefully to ensure we have fully understood what you need.

Summarise key points to check that we have understood what is needed, update systems to prevent customers having to repeat themselves.

Be Realistic and Responsive

3. Be clear about how we can help and how we are not able to.

If we are not able to assist you as you have asked, we will let you know this early on.

4. Complete follow up actions and provide updates as promised.

We will let you know of any next steps and stick to these or update you if something change

5. Be helpful when customers experience issues or changes.

We will let you know about changes that will affect you as early as possible and take ownership if you have an issue.

Customer Behaviour Charter

We expect that customers will...

Be Respectful

1. Treat staff with respect.

Abusive, racist or threatening language and behaviour will not be tolerated.

2. Allow staff to speak so that they can explain things fully when needed.

Be Realistic and Responsive

3. Be realistic with how we can assist you.

We will try our best to help but this may not always be able to meet expectations

4. Do things that we ask for to help our teams to help you.

The quicker you are able to do this, the quicker we can assist. If you are unclear about what we have asked or need support, please let us know.

5. Not take things out on our staff if something goes wrong.

We are sorry that things sometimes go wrong and the impact this can have on you. Once we know you have an issue, we will help to get it addressed.

Barnet Homes Resident Board's Vice-Chair's update

Dear Resident,

The Resident Board held their first business meeting of the year in March with senior heads of services.

We were pleased to hear about the measures that Barnet Homes are putting in place to address damp and mould issues, including introducing a brand new dedicated Healthy Homes Team to prioritise on carrying out inspections in homes where damp and mould has been reported. The Resident Board recently provided feedback on their Damp and Mould Policy and action plan, and we will monitor the work of the Healthy Homes Team very closely and keep you updated on their progress.

For you budding gardeners, the annual Finest Flowers Competition is now open for all nominations. Please visit page 28 for the details on how to enter.

If you are interested in finding out about becoming a member of the Resident Board and would like to attend a meeting as an observer, please email **Deborah.beckford@barnethomes.org**

To find out more about the topics the Resident Board discuss and information on Barnet Homes performance, you can read the minutes from our meeting on the Resident Board page at barnethomes.org.

Wishing you all a lovely Summer.

Tatiana Jose
Vice-Chair, Resident Board



Day in the life of Abraham Bickersteth, Senior Housing Officer at Barnet Homes



Hello, my name is Abraham Bickersteth and I am a Senior Housing Needs Officer at Barnet Homes. I started at Barnet Homes as a Graduate Trainee within the Housing Options Service in September 2018. After one year I became a Housing Needs Officer and recently became a Senior Housing Needs Officer within the service. I want to give you a flavour of what my job looks like.

My role primarily involves the following:

- Assessing a customer's housing needs and eligibility
- Preventing homelessness and providing high quality housing advice
- Assessing what priority band people fall into under Barnet's Housing Allocations Scheme

I manage a caseload of approximately 40 households. A typical day involves me speaking with my customers to enable me to best support them, requesting documentation to enable me to complete their banding assessment and completing tailored personal housing plans to ensure the customers.

I work with are provided with high quality advice to best support them in securing appropriate accommodation.

I also participate in a duty rota system. This means once a week I interview people approaching Barnet Homes requiring housing assistance. People approach us from a broad range of scenarios, for example: their landlord may have served them an eviction notice, or they are at risk of domestic abuse in their home, or they are in medically unsuitable accommodation.

It can often be very challenging and moving hearing the hardships people experience. I am passionate about preventing homelessness and look to always approach people's situations with empathy and take a person-centred approach. I also enjoy the problem-solving aspect of my work and find it very rewarding working with people to help resolve their housing situation. I cannot always meet people's ideal preferences but always aim to be accountable and make as positive a difference as possible.

I am lucky to work within a helpful and supportive team which is massively helpful.

Abraham's manager, Isabel Williams, Housing Needs Manager, "Since early 2021 Abraham has been selected to mentor our annual cohorts of six or seven Housing Needs Trainees and has done an amazing job helping to develop BH's Housing Needs Officers of the future. He has just the right mix of empathy and skill to both support and challenge in equal measure. He regularly receives excellent complimentary feedback from his colleagues as he is generous with his knowledge, attention and delivery of learning. A shining, conscientious exemplar."

Round up of works by our Fire Safety Team

By Gavin Bass - Head of Fire and Building Safety

Property Services

The Fire Safety Team was formed in 2017 following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower.

A team of individuals from within the organisation were appointed to this new team which has grown to ensure the health and wellbeing of all our residents.

One of our values is the safety of our residents and with this in mind the team have achieved the following in the past 36 months:





Fire compartmentalisation has been carried out to prevent spread of fire in homes

Removed gas supplies to a number of large panel system-built blocks



Fire Safety Works being undertaken to all hostels across the borough



Sheltered housing blocks have had extensive fire safety works, sprinkler installation, smoke alarms, new doors, etc carried out and is on-going to protect our elderly and vulnerable residents

To come...

Linking our work to other Property Services priorities...

Fire safety works to two care homes to include sprinkler installation, smoke alarms, new doors, and fire compartmentation

Fire safety works to the remaining 'at risk' sheltered housing schemes

Fire Safety works to medium and low-rise blocks

- New arrangements/ contractors for:
- o Lifts
 - o Water treatment
 - o Fire safety and compliance including sprinklers, fire alarms, electrical testing and much more

Building sustainability including wall insulation, heat pump and solar panel proposals

External remediation and landscaping proposals at Hostels and Sheltered Schemes

Satisfaction Surveys for Barnet Homes tenants

What survey?

Barnet Homes has commissioned Acuity, a market research company who specialise in the social housing sector, to carry out a telephone surveys with their tenants. The survey is a general satisfaction survey (perception survey) asking tenants what they think about their home and the services provided by Barnet Homes. The questions are based on the new Tenants Satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing from April this year.

Who are Acuity?

Acuity Research and Practice (Acuity) provide resident satisfaction surveys and benchmarking services, helping housing providers to improve services and engage with their residents through an understanding of satisfaction, performance and profiling data. They have been providing consultancy services to the social housing sector for over 24 years.

Who will be contacted?

Acuity will contact Barnet Homes tenants by telephone with the aim of interviewing approximately 1000 tenants over a six-month period starting on the 12th of June 2023. The survey should take approximately eight minutes to complete.

What number to look out for?

If you received a call from Acuity the number displayed will be **01273 093939**, which is a Brighton Area code. Acuity only make calls between the hours of 9:00am and 20:00 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 10.00am and 18:00pm on Saturday. Interviewers allow the telephone to ring for a minimum of 25 seconds, or until a voice mail system kicks in, to ensure customers with mobility issues are given sufficient time to get to the phone.

What about surveys for Opendoor Homes tenants?

Acuity will also carry out telephone surveys with Opendoor Homes tenants. This will happen later in the year. The survey questions will be the same as those asked of Barnet Homes tenants.

What about surveys for leaseholders?

Barnet Homes is also carrying out telephone surveys with leaseholders. The questions asked are similar to those used for tenants with some additional questions including one about service charges.



A new-look Fresh Start Scheme

If you are a social housing tenant in Barnet, you may be eligible for a payment of up to £15,000 if you downsize to a property with fewer bedrooms through our Fresh Start Scheme.

Assistance to help you move

To help make the move as smooth as possible, our Fresh Start Scheme also offers to:

- Pay your moving costs
- Pay for the installation of your white goods, including washing machine and cooker
- Pay for your mail to be redirected for three months
- Provide B&Q vouchers to help you to redecorate.

On top of this, our Fresh Start Scheme operatives are on hand to guide you through the process, and to help you to find a new home that you want to live in, which suits your needs.

The financial incentive

Through the Fresh Start Scheme, Barnet Council now offers £2,000 for every bedroom that you downsize by, up to a maximum of £10,000. For example, moving from a 4 bed to a 2 bed would gain you £4,000, whilst moving from a five-bed to a one-bed would gain you £8,000.

We also offer additional payments up to £5,000 for property types that we need most. Currently, we offer payments of £2,000 for partially adapted, wheelchair accessible properties, or £5,000 for fully adapted, wheelchair accessible properties.

Find out more!

To find out more about the scheme, whether you are eligible, and how to get involved. Please visit our [website barnethomes.org](http://www.barnethomes.org) or **call 0208 359 4695**.

Case study: Barnet Homes tenant Mrs DM aged 84, had lived in her three-bedroom family home in Muswell Hill with her husband for 17 years, but when he passed away she was alone and far from family.

With the help of her granddaughter Leighanne, and Denise Bracken, the Fresh Start officer from Barnet Homes, Mrs DM decided to move to Essex through the Fresh Start Scheme.

Leighanne told us “My nan is now happily settled into her beautiful 2-bedroom bungalow only minutes from us in Clacton-on-Sea.”





Alterations - make sure you get approval!

As a homeowner, you may wish to undertake alterations or improvements to your property.

However, under the terms of your lease you are required to seek permission before carrying out any works to your home.

Please note that apart from obtaining your landlord's consent through Barnet Homes, some works may require other permissions, such as planning permission or building regulations permission. It is therefore crucial that you approach relevant departments before you commence any works.

If you carry out home improvements without obtaining your landlord's consent where necessary, you will be

breaking the conditions of your lease. In this case, we will take enforcement action to ensure that the property is reinstated to its original condition and any legal and building costs that we incur will be recharged to you. Please be advised that if you purchase a property where unauthorised alterations were carried out by the previous owner, you will be responsible for rectifying the breach and the associated costs.

If you do obtain permission to carry out works, please ensure that your builders are considerate, and clean up any mess they make in the communal areas. You must also not leave any items in the communal areas overnight.

If you are concerned that one of your neighbours is carrying out alterations without permission, or if you have any questions then you can email us on TalkToUs@barnethomes.org.

Message from EDI Champion, Board Member Penny Farrar



This message comes from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champion Penny Farrar, the EDI Champion on The Barnet Group Board.

“We on the Board are very aware of the work being done across The Barnet Group to address racism and any other form of discrimination or harassment in our workplaces and the communities we serve. We all have a responsibility, and in particular

board members need to listen to what employees, and residents and service users and their families and carers, are telling us about their needs and experiences.

My role as Board Champion is to work with the network of TBG Champions and fellow board members to drive the EDI agenda forward. We need to effectively support those working hard to promote EDI within The Barnet Group and do what we can to make it a more inclusive place where differences are respected and valued.

The decisions we make can only be made better by understanding who our employees and customers are and having access to really good insight about what you and they need, so we would encourage you to make sure your personal information is up to date as this makes a real difference.”

Barnet Active Creative Engaging holidays

BACE HOLIDAYS

Free* holiday club activities are available for eligible children in Barnet - from Reception to Year 11!
*This is a fully funded project from Department for Education

BOOK NOW → barnetyouth.uk/BACEHolidays Summer 2023

get active
learn new skills
have fun

Caring for people, our places and the planet

YOUNG BARNET FOUNDATION
Department for Education
BARNET LONDON BOROUGH

Finest Flowers competition

Last year's Finest Flowers competition was fantastic! Our judges visited many beautiful gardens around Barnet and talked to residents who spend time and toil to make their garden space welcoming and improve their health and well-being.

One of last year's winners said, 'People stop and talk to me when I'm out tending my beautiful front garden and it helps reduce the feeling of isolation living by myself.'

It is proven that gardening has a positive impact on our mental and physical health and can reduce loneliness and isolation. New gardening clubs have sprung up around our homes and are all set to enter into this year's competition.

To enter your garden for any of the below categories, scan the below **QR code** from your mobile device or call **Deborah Beckford on 020 8359 5307**

- Best new gardener
- Best communal garden
- Best front/back garden
- Best balcony, pots or hanging basket



The closing date for entries is **Friday 21st July**. Judging will take place on **Friday 28th July**.

Community Chest Fund

In Spring we launched our new Community Chest Fund, sponsored by our contractor partners as part of their social value investment. The Fund aims to support Barnet based community projects throughout 2023/24.

We welcome ideas from residents and groups that would benefit from up to £250 to host their own community project or event.

To apply for funding visit our website and click on the community section and then Community Chest Fund. Alternatively, if you have a smart phone you can scan the **QR code on the right** which will take you to the application form.

Applications should include:

- When and where the project or event will be held
- How many people are likely to be involved in the project or attend the event

- How you will spend the funds you are seeking

Your applications should demonstrate:

- How the project or event aims to bring the community together
- That it is inclusive to all
- That you will be able to demonstrate an achievable outcome from the project or event.



Scan here