Issue 72 | Autumn 2021

atHome

Opendoor





GET IN TOUCH

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J 020 8080 6587 (8AM - 6PM, TRANSLATORS AVAILABLE)

BARNETHOMES.ORG OPENDOORHOMES.ORG

PAY YOUR RENT OR SERVICE CHARGE

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

ASSIST SERVICE

020 8359 4841 or assist@barnethomes.org

OUR OFFICE

2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

COMPLAINTS

The Barnet Group is committed to continuously improving what we do and the way we do it as a result of feedback from customers, and the people we support and their families. The Barnet Group aims to listen to and learn from our customers, enabling us to address any service failures, identify areas for improvement or areas of good practice, and monitor services in a customerfocused way.

We welcome complaints and feedback from our customers to help us do this. Feedback can be given to us by email, by telephone, and in person. Please barnethomes.org/complaints or use the information above to contact the Complaints Team.

IN THIS ISSUE

03 Welcome from the Chief Executive

Tim gives an update on what's been going on at Barnet Homes

04 News in brief

Everything you need to stay in the loop

06 Race equality

Our commitment to race equality, and supporting Black History Month

08 Rise to the Challenge

Grahame Park's Urban Gamez 2021

10 Our Community **Awards**

Celebrating Barnet's heroes

11 The Resident Board Representing Barnet Homes residents

12 Get involved Join our online forums

13 The Covid-19

recovery fund Getting you back on your feet

14 The Eastern **European support hub** Help when you need it

15 Training Our latest online training options

16 Finest Flowers 2021 Find out this year's winners!

18 Work and education BOOST's latest opportunities

20 Our Community **Engagement Strategy** How we'll serve you

22 Rent and money Keeping on top of things

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE TIM MULVENNA

Welcome to the Autumn 2021 issue of atHome, the magazine for Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes residents.

With social distancing restrictions ending, we've recently been able to host our first in-person resident events for almost eighteen months. It was so good to see so many people out at Urban Gamez at Grahame Park, and our Prospect Ring fun day, which both took place in September. While we've all seen that a lot can now be done online, there's often nothing better than being able to meet in-person. We're really looking forward to being able to put on more in-person events, and rebuilding those relationships.

We've recently celebrated the one year anniversary of our new in-house repairs and gas services, and we've been delighted to see so much positive feedback about the service from you. We're working hard to deliver repairs right at the first visit, and keep you updated if there's any changes to your repair. Unfortunately, the wellpublicised shortages of lorry drivers, and repairs operatives is beginning to have an effect on the services we're able to deliver. Our gas and repairs services are facing challenges in the supply of materials and staff in certain areas, meaning some repairs are being delayed. We apologise for the inconvenience this may cause, and can assure you we're doing everything in our power to get things moving as quickly as possible. You can read more about what we're doing on page five.

On pages six and seven you can read about our commitment to race equality, and what we're doing to ensure that we serve all our customers equally.



Finally, you can read about one of the highlights of our summer - the Finest Flowers competition! With so many people at home more often, our residents' gardens are looking better than ever, and we're so pleased to be able to share the winners with vou.

All the best. Tim

NEWS IN BRIEF KEEPING YOU UP-TO-DATE

Your chance to join our resident board

Calling all residents; we need you!

We currently have three vacancies on our newly formed Barnet Homes Resident Board. This is our top level of resident involvement, so if you are interested in finding out more about being a member please email us at Getinvolved@barnethomes.org or call Deborah Beckford on 020 8357 5307



Keep your home fire safe with the London Fire Brigade's new tool

The London Fire Brigade's (LFB) new tool allows you to carry out a thorough check of vour home in only a few minutes. It's simple and practical - giving you specific advice for your family and your home.

How it works

- Using a computer or mobile device, vou'll be asked a series of questions that will help the LFB work out the level of risk in your home, or the home of someone you care for.
- You can skip questions if you don't want to answer them, or don't know the answer. No personal data that can identify you will be collected.
- You'll be asked to visit each room in the home, and look out for particular risks in each
- After you've assessed each room in the home, you'll be given steps to take based on the information you've provided.
- The LFB might recommend you book an in-person visit if you choose to do that they will ask for your contact details to arrange it.

To find out more, and check your home is fire-safe, visit london-fire.gov.uk/safety/thehome/home-fire-safety/home-fire-safety-checker-hfsc



Zero tolerance towards abusive or aggressive behaviour

Our staff come to work to support the Barnet community, and it is important for all members of the public, customers and our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.

Aggressive or violent behaviour, be it

physical or verbal, towards our staff will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

We are sure that you will understand that proper behaviour is absolutely necessary for our staff and customers and that nonobservance will not be accepted.

Important update about the repairs service

July marked the one-year anniversary of Barnet Homes ending its contract with Mears and bringing the repairs service in-house. By the time you read this in October, the one-year anniversary of our gas service coming in-house will have also arrived. Whilst there have been many positives about the changes we have made to these services, including lots of positive feedback from customers, we are currently experiencing some significant challenges that mean we are not providing the repairs service to customers that we want to at all times.

Some of you may have seen in the news that there is a nationwide shortage of trade-based labour such as plumbers, carpenters, plasterers and electricians. This has been caused by a combination of the impacts of Covid and other factors, and is making it challenging for Barnet Homes to recruit to vacant trades positions in the repairs service. Whilst we have tried to use agency tradespeople to cover vacancies, this has been challenging as they are in high demand so some have moved elsewhere at short

notice. The subcontractors that we work with are facing the same labour challenges. These resourcing issues have resulted in a higher volume of 'works in progress' than expected and repair completion times for customers sometimes being longer than where we want them to be. It has also meant that some customers have had their repairs appointments moved or cancelled at short notice.

We are sorry if you have been affected by delayed repairs or moved appointments and for the inconvenience and difficulties that this has caused. We are doing what we can to address our resourcing challenges and reduce the volume of repairs that are in progress. We are also reviewing how we can better manage our communications with customers who report a repair during this period so that they are pro-actively updated as early as possible if there is going to be a delay or other issue with their repair. Those customers who are most affected by delayed repairs are being contacted with relevant updates and next steps where we have these



The Barnet Group's Race Equality Action Plan sets out how we aim to improve equal opportunities related to race to both our staff and customers. The Race Equality Action Plan shows our commitment to creating a more equal and inclusive working environment regardless of background. It includes over 65 initiatives which cover the following six themes:

- 1. Inclusion
- 2. Representation
- 3. Recruitment
- 4. Employee development and opportunity
- 5. Diversity and Awareness
- 6. Service provision

Service provision

One of the key successes relating to our customers within the action plan has been implementing monitoring of service access and take up by protected characteristics across different services. This action allows us to identify who is accessing our services, any over or under representation of different groups, potential trends which can prompt further investigation and any barriers to accessing our services.

What do these changes mean?

This means that we will be able to gather more meaningful data which directly represents our customer base. This allows us to tailor our work to support and include all diverse areas of our community.

To give an example, our rental income team have modified their arrears report to include diversity characteristics, this means that we are now able to identify any trends or over-representation from certain groups which will allow us to further investigate and tackle the various factors which could be influencing the results found. It will also allow the opportunity for discussions on how to address any over-representation and improve the experience for customers by providing them with the necessary help.

How you can help drive our equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives?

As our customers, you play a crucial role in informing and shaping our policies and decisions through the feedback you provide. Completing satisfaction surveys are a great way of giving us valuable insight into your experiences and the services you may or may not be satisfied with. Understanding your needs, priorities, and perception of the services we deliver is key in tailoring our services, especially relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. We strongly encourage you to participate by providing feedback when given the opportunity. Your input is crucial and is always appreciated!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Black History Month (BHM) UK (October) promotes knowledge, understanding and recognition of Black history and achievements. It aims to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions made by black people to the cultural and economic development of the UK.

People from many different backgrounds come together during this month to celebrate the positive role of black people in shaping our communities. Over the years the focus of BHM has expanded its coverage to include the history of African, Asian and Caribbean peoples and their contribution to Britain's 'island story'.

After visiting America in the 1970s, Ghanaian-born Akyaaba Addai Sebo, a special projects officer at the Greater London Council (GLC), founded the UK's version of Black History Month in 1987.

In the United States, BHM is celebrated in February because the birthdays of former US President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass fall within this month.

There are thought to be two reasons behind why BHM is celebrated in October in the UK:

- Traditionally, October is when African chiefs and leaders gather to settle their differences, so Akyaaba chose this month to reconnect with African roots.
- Additionally, many thought that since it was the beginning of the new academic year, October would give black children a sense of pride and identity.

BHM has since grown in the UK, becoming an important date in the cultural calendar of many of the UK's museums, galleries and local authorities, and over 6,000 events now take place each year.

KIDS AT GRAHAME CHALLENGE FOR UI

Friday 20 August was a big day for local residents at Grahame Park, as we hosted our annual Urban Gamez-inspired event for this year 'Rise to the Challenge'.

This year's event was sponsored by Morgan Sindall, Quinn London and Notting Hill Genesis, and supported by Greater London Leisure Ltd, F.U.S.E. Youth Project, Nutmeg Community and Barnet Council,. It saw over 150 people join us to watch 90 young people compete in a timed trial of our 'Danger Zone' obstacle course on Hevbourne Park, Colindale,

The day marked Barnet Homes' first major community event since the start of the pandemic, and it was great to see the residents from the Grahame Park community come together again.

Children and young people competed against one another in an 80-foot-long inflatable obstacle course. To rise to the challenge, they climbed over humps, battled through the 'biff bash zone', attacked the tyre section and skimmed down the final slide. Competitors with the fastest time of their age group and gender were crowned the winners. All young people and children

who took part received a free tee-shirt and a reusable Voicebox water bottle.

We had the pleasure of welcoming The Deputy Mavor of Barnet. Councillor Saira Don who kindly hosted our medals ceremony. alonaside Elliott Sweetman, the Barnet Group's Director Operations and Property and Farley Harris-Brown, Contract Manager from Quinn London who presented



PARK RISE TO THE RBAN GAMEZ 2021

each winner with a £30 gift voucher.

Throughout the day, our partners Greenwich Leisure Ltd and F.U.S.E Youth Project kept competitors active with a range of sports activities, whilst they waited to take up their challenge. Meanwhile, waiting parents and local residents had a chance to talk to Inner Circle Consulting about the future regeneration of the Grahame Park.

Tim Blanc, Head of Community Engagement for The Barnet Group added; "Along with our partners, we felt it was important to remind local residents, especially young people that we are here and care about their physical and mental wellbeing during these challenging times.

"We will continue to provide young people with opportunities to stay active and experience a little of what they have been missing during Covid.



"We are really looking forward to pulling out all the stops 2022 and having residents join us to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Urban Gamez"

We would like to thank all our staff, volunteers and sponsors, without whom Urban Gamez 2021 would not have been possible.









COMMUNITY AWARDS THE PILLARS OF OUR COMMUNITY

Saying thank you to your community



We want to recognise and truly thank all our residents that have gone above and beyond in supporting neighbours their fellow our across communities. the especially durina COVID-19 pandemic. also want to take the time to appreciate the hard work of local community groups and the voluntary sector in supporting our elderly and most vulnerable in Barnet. If you know of someone or any group you want to thank, now is the time to nominate them for a community award!

The categories are:

- Good Neighbour Award
- Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteer of the Year (under 25)
- Group of the (community or resident association)
- Voluntary Sector Organisation or Charity of the Year
- Covid-19 Inspirational person of the year

Visit barnethomes.org opendoorhomes.org submit vour nominations. email getinvolved@ barnethomes.org. If do not have access to the internet, please call Abby Watson on 020 8359 3450 to place your nomination.







THE RESIDENT BOARD REPRESENTING YOU

An update from Aruna Bhatt, board Chair

Dear residents, I hope you are all keeping well and had a great summer.

The Resident Board has been very busy recently. Our second meeting was held in June, and we were joined by heads of services from Barnet Homes, who presented reports on their services' performances over the past three months.

In June we discussed:

Resident satisfaction: Concerns were raised about the time taken to relet properties, acknowledging the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The board also requested further information about leaseholder satisfaction. particularly in relation to repairs. The board looks forward to seeing these at the next meeting.

Complaints: board The expressed concerns over communication around complaints and wanted to know more on what is being done pro-actively and practically to improve performance and overall satisfaction with how complaints are dealt with. We are keen to see improvement, and will monitor this over next 12 months. We are also looking forward to seeing comparison benchmarking with other landlords, which is being planned.

Safety and assurance: Coming out from lockdown restrictions, and a possible increase in tenancy failure, Barnet Homes assured us that their focus will be on tenancy sustainment and support, and that evictions would be a last resort.

Building and fire safety: Health and safety is a priority, and the board feels more needs to be done to meet the 100% risk assessment target. The board agreed the housing performance should always be priority and focus at future meetings.

The board was invited to give views on what The Barnet Group can do to

board.

improve its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as feedback. Members were asked to complete a standard equality form to capture the profile of the

June. members attended a Level One introduction to housing session, facilitated by LBL Skills. The session received

positive feedback from all participants with requests to access an accredited Level Two course that will be hosted this year.

In August we held our first Leasehold Services sub-group meeting to understand services and leaseholder satisfaction so that more detailed reports can be presented in future. On a final note, we look forward to receiving more feedback from residents so that we can continue to improve Barnet Homes' services together.

Best wishes. Aruna Bhatt. **Resident Board Chair**

GET INVOLVED YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Time to get involved: Join our online forums



As a Barnet Homes or Opendoor Homes resident, you have the right to be involved in the management of your home.

As a member of an involvement group you will be invited to join a range of opportunities that include taking part in focus groups, mystery shopping, service improvement projects as well as providing valuable feedback on how we can continue to improve our services.

Join our online forum

As part of your involvement you will also be invited to join one of our online forums. Your involvement and attendance are valuable to us; the sessions will provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences and thoughts.

Barnet Homes - The next forum will be held on Thursday 21 October from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm. To register your interest visit barnethomes.org or email getinvolved@ barnethomes.org.

Opendoor Homes - The next forum will be held on Thursday 4 November from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm. To register your interest visit opendoorhomes.org or email involved@opendoorhomes.org.

If you do not have access to the internet please call Camille Yerles on 020 8359 3148 for further information on either of our groups.

RECOVERY FUND HELPING COMMUNITIES BOUNCE BACK

Apply to our Covid-19 recovery fund

We are pleased to announce the launch of The Barnet Group's Covid-19 Recovery Fund. We know what a difficult year our residents and service users have had and we want to help you celebrate being able to get together again. The fund is available for you to apply to if you would like to organise a social get together in your community.

You can apply for up to £500 by filling out our online form available at thebarnetgroup.org/2021/08/02/covid-19-recovery-fund

In your application you will have to outline:

- what the funding will cover
- when and where you plan to hold vour event
- how many people are likely to attend
- how much funding you are requesting.

All applications will have to demonstrate:

- that the event aims to bring the community together
- that it is inclusive to all
- that you have an achievable outcome.

For residents or service users of Barnet Homes or Your Choice Barnet please getinvolved@barnethomes.org if you have any questions or require assistance to fill out our online form.

For residents or service users of Opendoor Homes email get.involved@ opendoorhomes.org.



The Romanian and Eastern European Hub

The Romanian and Eastern European Hub at Community Barnet is a service designed to support the Romanian community in London and more widely in the UK.

Together with a dedicated team of staff members and volunteers, their service offers support in Romanian to people who need help due to language, computer literacy or cultural barriers. They are supporting service users with accessing health services such as GP registrations or appointment bookings, English classes and food bank referrals, school registrations and consulate appointments to name just a few.

The hub also work in close partnership with solicitor practices and services that offer support with benefit, settlement scheme and employment applications, by referring cases to them and supporting with interpreting if needed.

loan, a service user who they helped to train

in construction and get legal employment said: 'I am very grateful for the help and support that the Hub has given to me. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for all the support given.'

The hub also has a dedicated line for Romanian speaking survivors of domestic abuse open on Mon, Tue and Thurs from 10am-2pm. If you or anyone you know are a survivor of domestic abuse and do not know who to turn to, you can contact them on 020 3984 4098. On the support received from us Alina, said: 'After leaving an abusive relationship, the hub has supported me and my two-year-old to get back on our feet. I have no support network in the UK and the support we received from the hub was absolutely amazing".

The service is open Mon-Fri from 9am-5pm and their contact details are available below.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Resident training programme



Over the next year, we will be providing residents with the opportunity to take part in free online courses and virtual training sessions. This is a great opportunity to gain new skills and be actively involved in your community. Register for our next sessions on at thebarnetgroup.org/training or for further information, you can email getinvolved@barnethomes.org



GARDENING THE 2021 FINEST FLOWERS WINNERS

Barnet's Finest Flowers steal the show

This year we held our second virtual Finest Flowers Competition, and we had an amazing number of entries, all of an extremely high standard. It seems that gardening has become the nation's lockdown hobby!

The judges had a very difficult job as all the residents who entered are winners in our eves!

Here's your 2021 Finest Flowers winners!

Best Front/Back Garden Haldane Close, Anthea Ranjit-Singh

Best Sheltered Garden Prospect Place, William Solomon

Best Communal Garden Bittacy Court, Debbie Docherty

Best New Gardener Fordham Road, Ludmila Gerasimova

Geoff Beddingfield Award for the most outstanding garden Deansbrook Road, John Barrett













WORK AND EDUCATION

Get back on track with BOOST's webinars



Everything you need to know to get into employment!



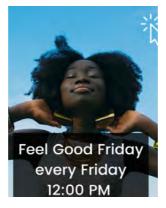
An opportunity for young people to discuss career options, job opportunities, and get support in applying to jobs and possibly some live vacancies.



Come along and meet our employment and wellbeing advisor Shak. He'll help you get ready for work and improve your wellbeing.



Technology doesn't have to be difficult. We will make sure to help you with everything digital until it clicks.



Come and meet our Employment Coach Michael Anderson. He will guide you with the overall goal of getting the right job for YOU!



Learn how to improve your digital skills and become more independent. Build your confidence in using technology in our fun monthly sessions.

Call one of our digital advisors or email them: Stella 075 9854 4927 stella. cooper@barnethomes.org | Fardowsa 077 7325 2470 fardowsa.mahamed@ barnethomes.org.

The Money Course: BOOST is hosting workshop by Christians Against Poverty: from building a budget to living within it. This course can help you manage your budget, help with debt issues, and prepare for Christmas and other big events.

To book your place, contact BOOST using the details below.



The Xplore team at Greenwich Leisure Limited are running a FREE eight-week healthy lifestyle programme for all families with children between the ages of 4-13.

Sessions are available across the various Better Leisure centres in Barnet and run after school, usually between 4pm-6pm.

Children get to take part in a fun physical activity session helping them with basic

skills and most importantly their feelings toward exercise and having some fun.

Parents receive a nutritional workshop from a professional accredited nutritionist in which they can have any concerns or questions answered about living a healthy lifestyle for them and their children.

To register email xplore.barnet@gll.org.

Help with fuel costs this winter

If you're concerned about rising fuel costs this winter, then rest assured help is out there.

If there's someone aged 60 or over in your household, you could be eligible for a **Winter** Fuel Payment.

Cold Weather Payments are one-off payments to help you pay for extra heating costs when it's very cold. You can claim for these if you're in receipt of certain benefits, including Income Support and Universal Credit. To find out more, speak to the Citizen's Advice Bureau or visit their website.

The Barnet Group Community Engagement Strategy gets seal of approval

atHome, we invited residents to tell us about the services that are Homes Resident Board on the draft Group Board.

Our three-year strategy outlines how we will engage and involve active role in shaping our services their local community.

The strategy will be accompanied by a three-year action plan, that will be monitored by the Barnet Homes

if you do not have access to the 020 8359 3148 to request a printed version to be sent to you.







WANT TO BE AN ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL WITHIN THE NHS?

If you have the ability to uphold the Trust values of:

Positively welcoming, Actively respectful Clearly communicating, Visibly reassuring

- A Good general standard of education - Min GCSE Level
- Excellent communication skills including a professional telephone manner
- Previous administration, front of house or reception experience with resilience and common sense in a fast-paced environment
- · A working knowledge of IT
- Sensitivity, tact and diplomacy



SUPPORTING YOU

YOUR RENT, AND DIGITAL SKILLS

Your rent and money

Are you aware that the government's furlough scheme ended on 30 September 2021?

If you have any concerns about your income now that furlough has ended, please contact us as soon as possible as we may be able to assist and support you with benefits advice. Please contact us using the details below. Our partners at BOOST are also able to support and provide you with advice on employment and IT training at boostbarnet. org.

Missing Universal Credit housing payments

Are you in receipt of Universal Credit and is your rent being paid to us directly? Is so, please read this.

One question we have been asked a lot since the roll out of Universal Credit is "why is my housing payment missing this month?". The answer is, there are no missing payments, except of course if you have been sanctioned or if you are no longer entitled to housing costs due to a change in vour circumstances.

If the above is not the case, due to the pattern of payments received from Universal Credit, it is easy to think that there is a missing payment. Universal credit payments are paid to landlords in a 4-weekly schedule. This means that there will be 13 schedules in every twelve month period. To ensure that there are only 12 months' payments made in a year, only 12 scheduled payments will be made and so, there is always one skipped schedule (gap) every year.

We understand that this can be very

confusing as claimants receive their payments every month as opposed to every four weeks for the Landlord.

Do you pay your rent online or via bank standing order?

If so, please ensure that you only quote your rent reference number as the main reference. This will ensure that your payment is quickly transferred into your rent account. Your rent reference number is nine digits long and starts with a '1' and can be found on any recent rent statement or rent letter. Should you be unsure of what your rent reference number is, please ring us on 020 8080 6587. Should you wish to set up a bank standing order, our bank details are below.

If you are a Barnet Homes customer, please use:

Sort code: 60-23-36 Account No: 82622833

Beneficiary: London Borough of Barnet

If you are an Opendoor Homes customer, please use:

Sort code: 09-02-22 Account No: 10672727

Beneficiary: Opendoor Homes

Reference: Please ensure that you quote your reference number which starts with a '1' and is nine digits long.

Are you an Opendoor Homes customer?

If so, please note that you cannot use the 24 hour automated payment line to pay your rent or the Barnet Homes/Council website. Rent can only be paid by using the bank details above or by calling 020 8080 6586.

Help getting online

Do you know people who struggle to use the internet? Do you need help to get online?

Get Online Week 2021 is an annual event which takes place this year from the 18th -24th October. We are supporting the event this year by promoting digital literacy skills.

Digital Skills are vital for carrying out a range of day-to-day tasks such as applying for jobs, accessing state benefits, health employment. education. entertainment and much more!

Here in Barnet, we're working as whole community to support our residents to build confidence, skills and knowledge around the online world

Whether you're a beginner or computer whiz, we have something for you!

Do vou work for community organisation? Why not get involved and hold your own event? What are your plans for helping Barnet residents to get online?

If you want to get involved or need help planning your event, please getonline@barnet.gov.uk Keep a look out for events taking place in your local area and tag us so we can share your events.

BOOST

Twitter: Follow and tag us on Twitter @ BoostBarnet #BarnetGetOnline

Barnet Council

Facebook and Twitter: Follow and tag @BarnetCouncil in your #BarnetGetOnline posts.



Choices

Ne Day London Links Mage,

Personal Assistant Service

Are you looking for flexible or part-time work caring for people locally in Barnet?

PA Choices matches people who are in receipt of direct payments with personal assistants who are able to support them on a day to day basis.

We have part-time and full-time positions available.





For more information

Call: 075 0003 3303

Email: pa@yourchoicebarnet.org