

atHome

Celebrating Barnet's Community Heroes!

The Barnet Group's Community Awards



ALL THIS YEAR'S AWARD WINNERS



SOCIAL VALUE CONTRACTOR



VOLUNTARY SECTOR GROUP



GOOD NEIGHBOUR



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



GROUP OF THE YEAR

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



GET IN TOUCH

- ✉ TALKTOUS@BARNETHOMES.ORG
- ✉ CUSTOMERCONTACT@OPENDOORHOMES.ORG
- 📞 020 8080 6587 (BARNET HOMES)
- 📞 020 8080 6586 (OPENDOOR HOMES)
- 🌐 BARNETHOMES.ORG | OPENDOORHOMES.ORG
- 🐦 @THEBARNETGROUP | 🐦 @BARNETHOMES
- 🐦 @OPENDOOR_HOMES |
- 🐦 COMMUNITY_TBG | 📷 @TBG_COMMUNITY1

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

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.

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This Spring issue of atHome magazine is packed with information and advice; from the launch of community skips, to help with paying your rent, to staying warm in your home, and news on funds and grants available for community events and activities.

We aim to keep you, the customer, central to everything we do and on page 4 you can find our performance information on how well we're handling complaints, as well as an update on our Repairs service on page 13. We are sorry to those of you have been affected by our recent repairs resourcing issues, but we are working to resolve these as quickly as possible.

We are committed to tackling cases of damp and mould in our homes, so we have set up a dedicated Healthy Homes Team to work to achieve this. You can read more about the work they will be doing on page 8.

I'm delighted to share with you the news that Barnet Homes have relaunched the face-to-face One Stop Shop for survivors of domestic abuse. This service is made possible through partnership working with multiple agencies and coordinated and hosted by our specialist staff team at Barnet Homes. Please spread the word about this valuable service which is featured on page 27.

For tenants of Barnet Homes, you'll find a handy pull out of your rent payments schedule on pages 14 and 15.

For our leaseholders, we have an update on procurement of new contracts for works and services on page 24.



For Opendoor Homes' residents we are looking for people to get involved in the Service Champions Group as well as the Involvement Group; these roles may be financially incentivised, so they're a great opportunity to be rewarded for having your say on the services you receive. More details are on page 26.

I was especially pleased to be able attend The Barnet Group Community Awards ceremony in person this year after two years of celebrating virtually. You can read about the winners on page 16. It's not too early to start thinking about our 2023 Community Awards! So, if there's someone or a group you know that is deserving of recognition, visit our website barnethomes.org or opendoorhomes.org to get your nomination in.

All the best,
Tim

OUR PERFORMANCE

YOU SAID, WE DID

Tenant Satisfaction Measures How well are we doing?

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is creating a new system, called 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures', for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

This new approach involves monitoring a range of standard satisfaction questions as well as key performance information, including for areas

such as building safety. It means tenants will be able to see how we are performing and how we compare with other landlords.

It's important for us to know how you feel about the services you receive from us, and we will continue to seek your feedback through a range of questions in our satisfaction surveys. The new tenant satisfaction surveys will start in June 2023, and we will share results with you in 2024.

Learning from your feedback

Between 1 October and 31 December 2022, **Barnet Homes** received 376 Stage 1 complaints. Of these, 44 were escalated to Stage 2 of our process. We answered **95%** of Stage 1 complaints within our target of 10 working days and **93%** of Stage 2 complaints within our target of 20 working days.

Here's how we learned from complaints:

You Said: Housing Officers and Anti-social Behaviour Officers were not always keeping in contact with you or returning messages as quickly as you would like.

We Did: We have now recruited an additional ASB Officer and a Housing Officer. This will improve response times and communication.

You Said: Too many appointments were being rearranged without notice, and on occasion, jobs were double booked.

We Did: We analysed our processes for booking jobs and are planning to identify where jobs are raised twice. We are also reviewing whether the same trades are raised on multiple jobs, so that we can try to consolidate them and give residents one appointment rather than two or three.

Between 1 October and 31 December 2022, **Opendoor Homes** received 12 Stage 1 complaints. Of these, three were escalated to

Stage 2 of our process. We answered **92%** of Stage 1 complaints within our target of 10 working days and **67%** of Stage 2 complaints (one was answered late) within our target of 20 working days. Here's how we learned from these complaints:

You Said: Follow-on works are not raised as quickly as you would like.

We did: We put in place a new follow-on process that is now managed by supervisors. Staff are now performance managed on this and we will monitor this. We expect that we will see a reduction in complaints about the timeliness of follow-on works being raised when a new trade is required.



It's all about you!

As part of Barnet Homes' and Opendoor Homes' preparations for the introduction of the Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which begin from April 2023, 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 representative sample. We will also be able to consider whether some tenant groups are less satisfied than others.

To address our tenant data gaps we have created a short survey on Survey Monkey. Where we have any 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.

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.

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. For information about how your personal data is processed and about your rights, please read our Privacy Policies on our websites; barnethomes.org/privacy or opendoorhomes.org/privacy.



Barnet Council housing-related strategies Coming soon

The Barnet Group has recently been developing a number of new housing-related strategies and policies on the behalf of and in collaboration with Barnet Council.

The council's draft Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and Tenancy Strategy, as well as its Housing Allocations Scheme, will first be reviewed by the Housing and Growth Committee and then public consultation will take place. Keep an eye on the council's Engage Barnet webpage in April and May (engage.barnet.gov.uk) to take part in the

consultations and provide your feedback, and look out for other ways to engage.

Where changes to the Tenancy Strategy will impact upon some existing Barnet Homes' tenants, you will be written to directly about this as part of the consultation.

Where changes to the Tenancy Strategy may impact upon some Barnet Homes tenants, you will be written to directly about this after the strategy has been approved.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion We are here to listen

In our autumn 2022 edition of atHome, we shared news of our new Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, 2022-26. This strategy sets out our commitment to being a more inclusive organisation by advancing equality of opportunity, tackling prejudice, and promoting understanding and accessibility. We value the diversity of the communities we serve, and we take steps to make sure that in everything we do no one is unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their age, disability, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

A priority within our strategy is to ensure the voices of all our residents are heard and

that you have fair access to the services you need. We are keen to hear from as many residents as possible.

To join the conversation and share your thoughts about how we could improve fairness and access to our services for everyone, register your interest by emailing getinvolved@barnethomes.org or get.involved@opendoorhomes.org

You can visit our website to read more about our aims and commitments in our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2022-26, and to find out through our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Annual Reports about how we are making progress: thebarnetgroup.org/publications.

The Barnet Group's Income Collection Team is here to support you

If you are struggling to pay your rent or need advice, please remember that our Income Collection Team is here to help you. We can support you with repayment plans, discretionary housing payments, welfare benefits, and hardship funds. We can also refer you to our in-house welfare benefits advisors who can carry out further checks to see if you may be entitled to further state benefits.

Please give us a call on **020 8610 3538** between the hours of 9am and 5pm. Further advice is also available on our website at barnethomes.org

We may get in touch with you by phone

Over the coming months, the Income Collection Team will be introducing an alternative method of communication to get in touch with you to discuss your rent account. You may start to receive calls and messages from the following three numbers:

020 8068 0301,
020 8068 0061
and **020 8068 0062**

We are aware that people can be cautious about answering calls from unknown numbers – and for good reason. Please be assured that contact

from these numbers are from us; we are trying to get in touch with you to discuss your account and offer support if necessary, to sustain your tenancy.

When you engage with these messages, we will never ask you to give any information directly to the automated caller – instead, you can be put through to a colleague who will then take you through standard data protection questions to access your rent account.

If you would prefer to contact us directly after receiving contact from one of the above numbers, you can reach us on **020 8080 6587** or **020 8610 3538**. Please note, any telephone numbers that we have on our system for your account may be contacted – this includes Third Parties whose telephone numbers you have given for us to contact on your behalf.



Household Support Fund

Barnet Council has provided **BOOST** with funding to support vulnerable households (18 - 55 years old) most in need of help with rising essential living costs. You can find more information on eligibility, types of support available and how to apply for support on boostbarnet.org/?page_id=8849

You can also drop-in to Burnt Oak Library on Monday to Thursday from 9:30-12:30pm if you require additional support.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

Are you struggling to pay rent? If so, you may qualify for a Discretionary Housing Payment. Please speak to your Income Collection Officer for more information on how to access it by calling **020 8610 3538** or visit the Barnet Council website on barnet.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-financial-advice/barnet-resident-support-fund



Our new Healthy Homes Team is here to tackle damp and mould

Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes are committed to providing homes where residents can live long and fulfilling lives. To ensure residents are safe and comfortable where they live, we are investing £2m to tackle damp and mould in properties.

By thoroughly surveying our homes, we have a comprehensive record of residents who may have damp and mould in their homes, and will be attending the homes with the most severe cases as a priority. If your home is one of those which has been identified, we will be in contact with you in the near future.

We are also creating a **Healthy Homes**

Team, who will invest in making our homes great places to live; with dedicated members of staff to help treat cases of damp and mould in homes, and give advice to all our residents.

Ryan Bolton, The Barnet Group's Head of Repairs and Estates said "This £2m investment in our homes shows that we are committed to making our residents' homes the best possible place to live. We have a detailed action plan to tackle damp and mould in homes, which we are now working on. We will share more information about it with you in the next issue of atHome."

Preventing damp and mould in your home

Condensation is the water produced when moist air, vapour or steam meets a cold surface - such as windows, walls and floors and places with little air moving around. You can see it on bathroom mirrors when you bathe or shower. Black mould spots occur on damp surfaces where there is little movement of air due to poor ventilation.

Damp inside a property can be caused by structural defects (for example a leaking pipe), or by condensation. If damp is not caused by a structural defect, then condensation is the issue, and the only lasting way to avoid severe mould is to reduce or eliminate the source of condensation.

Three steps to avoid condensation in your home

1. Try to produce less moisture

Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly.

- Cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling
- Dry washing outdoors on a line if you can, or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on.

2. Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without causing draughts.

- Keep a window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when possible.
- Open kitchen and bathroom windows wider
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use
- Don't put furniture directly next to external walls
- Regularly wipe down surfaces such as windows which attract moisture.

3. Heating

You will get less condensation if you keep your home warm most of the time.

- Insulation and draught proofing can help keep your home warm and cut fuel bills. However:
 - do not draught proof a room where there is a cooker or a fuel burning heater, like a gas fire
 - do not draught proof windows in the bathroom or kitchen.
- In cold weather, keep low background heating on all day, even when no one is home. Most houses take quite a long time to warm up, and may cost more to heat it up quickly in the evening.

For more information

Download our condensation leaflet for a full list of tips on how to prevent and treat damp issues caused by condensation. The leaflet can be found on the Barnet Homes' website, under My Home > Condensation.

Contact us

If you are doing everything that you can 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. Our team will assess the cause of damp, and establish a plan to treat it and stop it from returning.

Resident Service Champions



As part of The Barnet Group's Customer Experience Strategy 2022-24, we committed to creating more opportunities to hear the voice of our residents on an ongoing basis. This includes holding focus groups and interviews more regularly to better understand customer experience and introducing Resident Service Champions. These Champions will give residents the opportunity to review our planning and communications in the areas that are most important to them and help track the delivery of promised improvements. We are currently planning engagement activities for the areas of: damp and mould, major works, fire safety, energy efficiency/sustainability and anti-social behaviour.

If you are a Barnet Homes or Opendoor Homes resident and would like to register your interest in future resident engagement opportunities, including becoming a Resident Service Champion for an area that interests you, please send an email to Talktous@barnethomes.org or customer care@opendoorhomes.org with 'I want to participate in engagement or become a Resident Service Champion' as the subject of your email. When emailing us, please include your name, address and your tenancy or account number. If you have a particular area of interest e.g. fire safety or damp and mould, please let us know that too. Thank you!

Get together, get involved and have your say

Last year we held four virtual 'Get together, get involved' meetings, inviting residents to share their feedback on how we can improve our housing and support services. Residents received information and contributed to discussions on the cost of living, customer experience, building and fire safety, and skills and employment support available.

It's important to us that future meetings are guided by what is important to you. To have your say on topics you would like to see discussed, please email getinvolved@barnethomes.org or get.involved@opendoorhomes.org, alternatively call Charmaine Carr on 020 8359 2632.

RESIDENT SNAPSHOT

MEETING OUR WONDERFUL RESIDENTS!

Green-fingered Geraldine

The winner of the Good Neighbour category at the recent Barnet Group's Community Awards was Geraldine Haran.

Geraldine is a Barnet resident who loves to volunteer as a communal gardener for her small block in north Finchley and at her local church. She also likes to teach young residents how to grow vegetables. She tells us a little bit about her communal gardening activities.

"In 2012 I moved from West London to Finchley in Barnet through the home swap scheme. Back then I didn't know any of my neighbours, and because I love gardening, I thought I'd get involved in starting the residents' community garden. It was a nice space but a little overgrown. Once we began gardening, residents started to come out to enjoy it, to help out or just to have a chat. It's now used a lot more by people, especially families with young children. We even do a communal barbecue every summer!

"In my spare time I go to the local allotment and sometimes take my neighbour's children with me and I teach them how to grow vegetables. Outdoors I grow potatoes, beans, carrots, garlic and onions and in my greenhouse I grow

aubergines and chillies. I really like to share the produce with my neighbours.

"I also volunteer to do the weeding and watering of plants at my local Church garden in Finchley."

Geraldine's next door neighbour of 10 years, Marielle, told us why she nominated her for the Good Neighbour category, "Geraldine is very selfless, she's always thinking about other people, and she's always offering to help her neighbours. We appreciate her kindness and ability to get neighbours together in the garden, particularly during Covid - which was great for our mental health."



Finest Flowers - Spring is in the air

Hello budding gardeners! It's never too early to start planning to enter for this year's Finest Flowers competition! So, get your gloves on, spades and watering cans ready and start planting!

To enter please visit barnethomes.org, or opendoorhomes.org or scan the QR code below or call Deborah Beckford on 020 8359

5307 to submit your entry. The categories include best new gardener, best garden (front, back or communal), best balcony, pot or hanging basket, and an overall prize for the most outstanding garden.

The closing date to enter is Friday 14 July and the judging will take place on Friday 28 July.



Free Community Skip Service used by over 80 households a day!

The Community Skips service is available to each household in Barnet once every three months to help you dispose of large items more easily. You can bring up to three large items after showing proof of your address.

A campaign was recently launched to further promote the service and inform residents that they can come along not only to dispose of items but to also keep in touch with their friends and neighbours. Find out more about the service at: barnet.gov.uk/communityskips

3,079
households have
used the service

74 locations
have had skips
delivered

Giving your items a new lease of life

Together with Barnet Council, we want as many of your items as possible to be recycled or reused. We are looking into options that will allow for items that are in good condition to have a new future once deposited.

If you are thinking about disposing of an item that might benefit someone else, why not donate it, give it to a friend or come along to one of Barnet Council's reuse events this summer. Find out more at barnet.gov.uk/reuse



**Barnet
Homes**
REPAIRS & ESTATES SERVICES

PERSON CENTRED

An update from our Repairs team

We are sorry for the recent issues with our repairs service which have meant that many residents may have had a long wait for their repair appointment to be scheduled and their repair issue to be fully resolved.

What has caused the issues?

Since early January the Barnet Homes Repairs team has not had the number of operatives required to complete the volume of repairs needed by residents. The main reasons for this are a high level of staff vacancies and higher than expected requests for repairs.

A third of roles needed to manage the delivery of responsive repairs were vacant at the end of January. Vacancies for repairs operatives have been an ongoing issue for Barnet Homes and the contractors that we work with due to difficulties recruiting and retaining operatives with certain trade skills such as plumbers and plasterers, in the context of a severe nationwide shortage of skilled tradespeople after the pandemic.

Alongside resourcing challenges, the volume of repairs requested in December and January was higher than we expected by about 1,500 repairs. The higher than expected volumes have continued into February and March. Factors that we are aware of which have caused the increase in repairs needed are an increase in reports of damp and mould and repairs identified from proactive checks and surveys that we have recently completed in residents' homes.

Impact on customers

We are still able to prioritise repairs of an urgent nature. In January 2023 there were 416 emergency repairs and these took an average of 1.3 days to complete (the target is to complete them within 1 day).

Non-emergency repairs are taking longer to resolve for customers. In January 2023, it took us an average of 35.7 days to complete non-emergency repairs, against a target of 28 days.

What are we doing to address the issues?

We are progressing a range of activities to resolve the current resourcing issues including working with both existing and new repairs subcontractors and temporarily increasing the number of agency operatives working for us.

We are also taking steps to plan ahead to make sure we have sufficient resourcing to meet our repair service standards for residents on an ongoing basis in the future, including in the colder months when we are likely to have higher demand. This includes refreshing our forecasting about the volume and nature of future repairs to inform our recruitment activities and exploring options to improve the retention of operatives.

We expect that the action that we are taking will mean that we are better able to assist with residents' repairs by the end of May 2023.

Paying your rent

For Barnet Homes residents only - not applicable to Opendoor Homes residents.

Your tenancy agreement says you must pay your rent in advance. Therefore, you should make your first weekly, fortnightly or monthly payment on or before 3 April 2023. If paying fortnightly, you should pay on the bold dates.

Weeks 13, 26, 39 and 52 are rent free.

We offer monthly direct debits. You can pay on the 1st or the 15th of each month.

If you have a debit or credit card, you can pay your rent by telephoning us on **020 8080 6587** between 8am and 6pm or online at **[barnethomes.org](https://www.barnethomes.org)**.

You can also pay your rent by telephoning the 24/7 automated telephone payment line on **0845 356 3456**. Please select 'housing rent' as the payment option and ensure that you have your nine digit rent account number to hand which starts with a '1'. This can be found on your rent statement or a rent letter.

For a full list of payment methods, please see the 'Rent & Money' section on our website, **[barnethomes.org](https://www.barnethomes.org)**.

Rent payment dates 2023/24

Date	Week	Date	Week
3 April	1	2 October	27
10 April	2	9 October	28
17 April	3	16 October	29
24 April	4	23 October	30
1 May	5	30 October	31
8 May	6	6 November	32
15 May	7	13 November	33
22 May	8	20 November	34
29 May	9	27 November	35
5 June	10	4 December	36
12 June	11	11 December	37
19 June	12	18 December	38
26 June	13 (rent free)	25 December	39 (rent free)
3 July	14	1 January	40
10 July	15	8 January	41
17 July	16	15 January	42
24 July	17	22 January	43
31 July	18	29 January	44
7 August	19	5 February	45
14 August	20	12 February	46
21 August	21	19 February	47
28 August	22	26 February	48
4 September	23	4 March	49
11 September	24	11 March	50
18 September	25	18 March	51
25 September	26 (rent free)	25 March	52 (rent free)

The Barnet Group Community Awards 2022



On the evening of Thursday 26 January 2023, 180 guests gathered at a gala dinner and dance to celebrate the winners of the Barnet Group Community Awards. The nominations for these awards have been submitted by Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes residents, staff, voluntary and community partners from across Barnet who wanted to acknowledge those who have made a positive impact in their communities.

Tim Mulvenna, CEO of The Barnet Group said, "It was brilliant to be able to attend our recent Community Awards in person, it was the first time since Covid that we have all been together to celebrate the extraordinary work of some of our residents and also to thank our contractors for the support they give through their Social Value. None of this would be possible if it wasn't for our organising committee of volunteers

on the night, and a special thank you to our Community Engagement team of Deborah Beckford, Tim Blanc, Charmaine Carr and Andrzej Perkins. The winners, and all those nominated really make a difference in their communities and help make Barnet such a great place to live."

The Mayor of Barnet, Cllr Alison Moore said, "It was a real pleasure to join residents, voluntary groups, officers and the sponsoring contractors for the Barnet Group Community Awards, celebrating all the amazing contributions of a room full of amazing nominees. I had the chance to talk to lots of them during the evening and hear about the difference they make to our communities. It was really inspiring to meet all the nominees and an honour to be asked to present awards to all the winners. Congratulations to everyone!"



Good Neighbour – Geraldine Haran: For always going the extra mile. Geraldine gave care packages to isolating children and families during Covid. She always shops for other neighbours, looks after communal spaces, and volunteers at her local church. Her nominator described her as ‘a ray of sunshine’.

Geraldine Haran pictured receiving her award said, ‘I was shocked to be nominated by one of my neighbours in Finchley. I feel a bit overwhelmed at winning this award – it’s a lovely gesture and wonderful celebration!’

Group of the Year – Bread n Butter Project: A project which supports people in Barnet to gain the skills and confidence to be able to cook simple, healthy and tasty dishes at home.

Filomena from Bread N Butter Project said, ‘We are delighted to have been awarded ‘Group of the Year’, it means so much to us to be recognised for the work we do. Knowing that we are making a difference within our local community is what drives our passion.’



Pictured left to right: Filomena Komodromou, Vicki Williams, Cllr Alison Moore The Mayor of Barnet, and Natasha Walter.

Voluntary Sector Group or Charity of the Year – Unitas: A charity which engages with young people to provide sports, arts and crafts and a wide range of other activities. They support over 700 young people every week in Barnet.

Michelle Allen, Unitas Enterprise Coordinator, “It was such a privilege to attend with my colleagues and young people from Unitas. How awesome to be invited to an event and be able to be around such inspiring organisations and then bring back the awards for Voluntary Sector Group/ Charity of the year. Thank you to those that nominated and voted for Unitas, we truly appreciate it.” To find out more about Unitas turn to page 19.



Young Volunteer of the Year – Shanice and Candice Howell: Shanice and Candice – 19 years old – are twins, who live on the Stonegrove estate. Over the summer holidays they gave up their time to volunteer at their local youth club to help support children and young people living on their estate.



Volunteer of the Year – Shaun Sherrick: Shaun works tirelessly organising the Barnet Walking Football Team, which has 140 players who are up to 86 years old. It's not just football, they have a walking group, curry club and a cycle group too.

On receiving the award Shaun said “On behalf of everyone at Barnet Walking Football Team I am incredibly proud to win this award, a recognition is wonderful because everybody puts so much effort in.”

Social Value Contractor of the Year – Masher Brothers:

They went over and above for an elderly tenant who had lost everything. They supplied him with all the white goods to his kitchen and some furniture, all at their own cost. Masher Brothers have also carried out a full refurbishment of the One Stop Shop which is used for a school on the Grahame Park Estate; again, bearing all the costs of the refurbishment. They devoted their own time to support residents at Grahame Park, and donated vouchers to struggling families at Christmas. All in all, they've shown great social value.



Dan Allen of Masher Brothers said, “As a company, we are honoured to have won The Barnet Group's Social Value Contractor of the Year award. Our wonderful team is committed to improving the lives of Barnet's residents, and they will continually strive to do so.”



Covid 19 Inspirational Person of the Year – Denise Lazarus: Denise has been an outstanding volunteer in 2022, continuously contributing to the Covid-19 Vaccination programme in Barnet. She has committed over 200 hours of her time (and counting) to support Gateway Chemist, located in Finchley, with their vaccination process. From checking in patients to managing waiting areas and assisting with patient flow, Denise has maintained a welcoming, friendly and professional atmosphere for everyone at the pharmacy.

For photos of the evening, search for “The Barnet Group Community Awards” on YouTube.



It's not too early to start thinking about our 2023 awards! Our community heroes make a difference throughout the year, not just during the nomination period. So, if there's someone or a group you know that is deserving of recognition, visit thebarnetgroup.org to get your nominations in. You can also use the QR code to the right to get to the form.

Event sponsors



Community group spotlight: Unitas, winners of The Barnet Group Community Awards



Winners of the Barnet Group Community Awards category Voluntary Sector Group of the Year were Unitas, a community group based in the Youth Zone Centre in Edgware, Barnet. Their work focusses on activities for young people between the ages of 8 to 19 (up to 25 for those with additional needs) and have over 700 young people in the building every week. The project brings together young people, generous businesses, and philanthropists to offer impactful, sustainable 21st century youth provision.

Michelle Allen, Enterprise Coordinator, Unitas, says “We are a busy, buzzy place where young people come together in unity to make friends, have fun, learn new skills and create a very special community. The Unitas Youth Zone Centre is open

seven days a week for young people in Barnet. Every session we offer a huge range of activities – sports, art, music, dance, cooking, enterprise, employability, multimedia and so much more – run by talented and dedicated youth workers who are not only specialists in their areas but are also there to support any and all young people with the many challenges they might face. We also visit local schools and colleges to do assemblies and attend careers fairs.”

Joining Unitas is easy; sign up online at unitasyouthzone.org. Membership is £5 for the year and 50p every time you visit. You can even purchase a hot meal for £1. The Youth Zone is at **76 Montrose Avenue, Edgware HA8 0DT**. Follow them on Instagram: [@unitas.ambitions](https://www.instagram.com/unitas.ambitions).

Community Chest Fund 2023

The Barnet Group's Community Chest Fund 2023 is funded by our contractor partners as part of their social value investment and aims to support Barnet based community projects throughout 2023/24.

Do you have an idea for a community project, community social get together event or are you a Barnet based group that would benefit from the fund? Then please visit our barnethomes.org or opendoorhomes.org and click on the community section and then Community Chest Fund. Alternatively, if you have a smart phone you can scan the QR code below which will take you to the funding application form.



You can apply for up to £250 by completing the online form which will ask when and where your event will take place, how many people are attending, how much you are asking for and what it will cover. Your application should show how the event will bring the community together, how it is inclusive and that you have an achievable outcome.

The Big Lunch

Time to celebrate with a royal knees up!

In preparation for the Royal Coronation of King Charles, the annual Big Lunch event is moving to the May Bank Holiday. It's a great time to join millions across the UK to celebrate the coronation and have a grand knees up at the same time.

The Big Lunch continues to be one of the UK's biggest annual celebrations for neighbours and communities to get together. Whether it's a small gathering in a garden, park or driveway, or a much larger street party, it's a great time to connect with neighbours.

To celebrate this year's event The Barnet Group is supporting events that are organised by our

residents with grants of up to £250 from our Community Chest Fund.

For further advice and guidance on planning an event, visit the Big Lunch website edenprojectcommunities.com where you can also request a free Coronation Big Lunch Pack, which is full of ideas, inspiration, tips and practical advice.

If you need funding to help plan a Big Lunch event, speak to our Community Engagement Team by emailing getinvolved@barnethomes.org or get.involved@opendoorhomes.org or calling Charmaine Carr on 020 8359 2632.

Our Resident Board Chair's Report

Dear Residents,

Happy Spring! After a long and difficult winter with many people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, it is with renewed vigour that the Resident Board are here to be your voice and work with Barnet Homes to improve services to you.

In January, I attended the Community Awards. They were very inspiring and it was a joy to hear the stories of the fifty plus nominations, and to know there are so many groups and individuals who are working to make a positive impact on our lives. It was a great evening to recognise and celebrate them with 180 people attending.

I attended the National Federation of ALMOs' first Tenants Advisory Panel meeting for 2023, which was held in early February. It focussed on policy updates, and the role of the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman. There were extended discussions regarding lifestyle choices, landlord responsibilities, and the health effects of damp and mould on those who live in and are exposed to such situations. You can find out more about preventing damp and mould in your home on page nine of this edition of atHome.

In March of last year, the Resident Board welcomed two new members. If you have made and already broken your new year's resolutions, how about making another one; to find out what the Resident Board is all about by attending a meeting to see how we work, and think about giving up some of your time to become a member. I am always happy to have a chat with you in person. If you are interested in finding out more or making an appointment to have a chat with me, please either email getinvolved@barnethomes.org or call Deborah Beckford on 020 8359 5307.

I hope you enjoy spring, and if you're one of our many residents who enjoy gardening, perhaps you can even get involved in our Finest Flowers gardening competition! You can find out more about that on page 11.

Best wishes,
Aruna Bhatt,
Chair of Resident Board



Resident Support Group Have your say, join today!

If you are looking for a way to have your say about our services, the Resident Support Group is open to all Barnet Homes' tenants and leaseholders to join. As a registered member, you will receive invitations to take part in various activities to have your say on how we are doing in providing housing services. Activities include attending focus groups, taking part in surveys, being consulted on our policies and strategies, mystery shopping and access to a range of theme-based meetings. Some of the activities may also be financially incentivised.

The group feeds directly into the Barnet Homes' Resident Board and requires very little commitment, which may be of interest if you have a limited amount of time available.

For more information, visit our get involved page on the Barnet Homes website or simply scan the QR code opposite on your smart phone. Alternatively call Deborah Beckford on 020 8359 5307 for more information.

We are keen to ensure the Resident Support Group is fully representative of our diverse resident community and supports our commitment to



inclusion across gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability.

Supporting ex-offenders to resettle into the community

The Government's Accommodation for Ex-Offenders programme seeks to increase support for vulnerable ex-offenders, by helping them to obtain accommodation in the private rented sector. Research shows that former prisoners who are in stable accommodation are significantly less likely to reoffend within a year than those who are homeless or in temporary accommodation.

Through this programme, Barnet Homes recently submitted a successful funding bid for £332,000 over 2 years. We will use the funding to recruit two Floating Support Officers within Housing Options and a Lettings Negotiator within Let2barnet. We will aim to support 66 individuals over two years by helping them to obtain accommodation, sustain their tenancy and reintegrate into the community.

Stay warm in your home

It may be spring, but temperatures can still be low, and many people are still using their central heating.

However, the rising costs of utilities mean you may not be using your heating as much as you would like. To help residents, Barnet Homes has partnered with Radflek to offer a free energy saving pack to eligible homes. The pack includes:

- a radiator reflector: which goes behind your radiator and reflects heat back into your room, rather than heating the wall
- draught excluders: to block gaps that let cold air in and warm air out

- energy efficient light bulbs: to lower your energy bills without reducing the quality of light in your home

If you are interested in seeing if your home is eligible for a free energy saving pack, please email your name and address to kundai.rusike@barnethomes.org, who will get in touch with you.

If your property is not eligible for Barnet Homes' work, you can still purchase Radflek products with a 20% discount by visiting radflek.com/shop and entering the code **BARNET20** at the checkout.

Energy assessments to help you save energy

We are undertaking energy assessments on all our stock to be able to plan works to reduce the effect of climate change, reduce tenants' fuel bills and improve the air quality in all our homes.

This takes significant organisation, and like many housing providers, we are currently in the planning stages for this initiative. We will notify residents of our plans as soon as we are able.

We have recently submitted a bid for grant funding and in the event that we are successful, we will be undertaking works on around 250 homes over the next two years. This will be allocated to some of our homes that are hard to heat and located in areas that contain the highest proportion of deprivation and fuel poverty.

This is, of course, just the start and we have a target to carry out energy improvement works on all our older stock by 2030.





Boroughwide Qualifying Long Term Agreement Consultations

In 2012 Barnet Homes entered into long-term agreements with providers for contracts for various works and services provided for the past ten years. Some of these agreements are now coming to the end of their contract term and Barnet Homes will be procuring new contracts for a number of different works and services.

In recent months Leaseholders will have received several Section 20 Notices expressing or progressing Barnet Homes' intention to procure these new long-term agreements. During the course of the next few months, further Section 20 notices will be served to cover the following contracts:

- water treatment and replacement cold water storage tanks
- cyclical redecoration and repairs

(2023-2028)

- communal cyclical servicing and maintenance
- planned major works: roofs, windows and doors
- insurance.

The contracts will be for works and services required for homes throughout the borough. Works and services will not always affect your block or estate. It is worth noting that at this point these contracts are not for specific blocks or estates and so there will be no relevant cost information available. You will continue to receive Section 20 notices in relation to major works planned to your specific estate or blocks, where your contribution is likely to exceed £250.

Future Consultation Meetings

Following the procurement of the boroughwide contracts, where significant major works are being planned to your block, we will offer consultation meetings when the contracts are being planned. These meetings will inform leaseholders

of what we are planning to do and why. Meetings may be held virtually or face-to-face and will normally include a major works project manager and a representative from the Leasehold Development Team.

Paying Service Charges

Annual Service Charges

You should have now received your new estimate service charges for 2023-2024.

Please remember estimates are payable quarterly in advance, however you can choose to pay by ten monthly instalments to help spread the payment.

Major Works Charges

We are currently carrying out a number of essential health and safety related work programmes across the borough. These include:

- replacing electrical rising mains
- installing or upgrading communal and emergency escape lighting
- fire safety works
- works to the cold-water storage systems
- window and roof replacement programme

Prompt payment incentives are available for both annual service charges and major works charges. These include:

- £10 incentive for payment of annual

service charges in full in the month of April

- £10 incentive for first set up of direct debit for annual service charges
- 2.5% incentive for payment of major works charges in full within 28 days of the invoice

Whilst these works are necessary, we understand that the costs may place a financial burden on some of our leaseholders, particularly in the current difficult economic climate.

If you are experiencing financial difficulty, you are encouraged to contact your Income Collection Officer as soon as possible to discuss payment options.

In some cases, referrals can be made to organisations offering more specialist money management advice and support. The sooner you get in touch, the more chance we have of helping you. You can get help by contacting our Customer Contact Team on 020 8080 6587.

GET INVOLVED

REPRESENT YOUR COMMUNITY

Join our Opendoor Homes' Resident Involvement Group

Are you looking for a way to have your say about our services? As an Opendoor Homes resident, the Involvement Group is just for you.

Once registered you will have the opportunity to have your say on how we are doing in providing housing services. You will receive invitations to take part in focus groups, be consulted on our policies and strategies, take part in mystery shopping and have access to a range of theme-based meetings. Some of the activities may also be financially incentivised.

Registering onto the group requires very little

commitment, which may be of interest if you have a limited amount of time available.

For more information, visit our get involved page at openodorhomes.org, alternatively call Deborah Beckford on 020 8359 5307 for more details.

We are keen to ensure the Involvement Group is fully representative of our diverse resident community and supports our commitment to inclusion across gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability.

Time to join our Opendoor Homes' Service Champions Group

In February, Opendoor Homes residents met with our housing services for the first of many Service Champion meetings. As Service Champions, residents have committed time to act as a critical friend, providing us with important feedback on their experiences in accessing our housing services and sharing their ideas on how we can improve.

Stacey, Elisa and Yasmin shared with us why they believe it's important for them and all residents to have their say.

"We are here to make a difference and have your voice heard and want to contribute towards making a difference even if it is small"
Stacey, Opendoor Homes resident.

"With the help of residents, we will be able to compile the needs and wants of everyone living in Opendoor Homes"
Elisa, Opendoor Homes resident.

"It's imperative for us as Barnet residents to get involved with groups like this and share our experiences. It's about what we can do to make things better for the future and not dwelling on the past"
Yasmin, Opendoor Homes resident.

We are keen to ensure the 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.

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

To express your interest or to find out more about the role, please email get.involved@opendoorhomes.org or call Deborah Beckford on 020 8359 5307.

Barnet Homes re-launches One Stop Shop supporting survivors of Domestic Abuse

Last month, Barnet Homes re-launched the face-to-face One Stop Shop, supporting survivors of Domestic Abuse. Kate Laffan, Director of Customer Experience and Improvement, said, "I am so pleased that we are finally able to re-launch the delivery of our One Stop Shop (OSS) for survivors of Domestic Abuse in person in the new Colindale office. Whilst this has been delivered virtually since March 2020, it has been so much harder to deliver the same level of outcomes without a physical presence. The OSS is a drop-in service where survivors and those at risk of domestic abuse can receive support from many specialist agencies all under one roof including housing advisors, benefits advisors, legal advice through solicitors, 'no recourse to public funds' advisors, wellbeing advisors and more."

Domestic Abuse Team Manager Nihal said, "I am very happy and grateful that we are providing this vital service to survivors so that they will be able to access a holistic service under one roof. In our first session we assisted seven survivors, one of whom needed emergency assistance with housing. The feedback from those who attended was very moving and really highlighted the need for this service from those survivors showing such bravery in the face of terrible situations."

The face-to-face Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop runs **every Thursday from 9.30am to 12.30pm** at the new office of **The Barnet Group at 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW**. For more information see details on the back page of atHome.

CASE STUDY

Vanessa shares her recent experience of the One Stop Shop

We spoke to Vanessa (name changed) who had suffered domestic abuse for the past 15 years. Vanessa came to the OSS and received support from our multi-agency team, she tells us about her experience.

Tell us a bit about yourself?

I live in Barnet with my children. I have suffered domestic violence from my partner for 15 years. I still suffer it now even though we're not together. I have been supported by the police and an independent advocate for domestic violence (IDVA) from Solace Women's Aid and the Barnet Homes' OSS service.

How you have been supported by Barnet Homes' multi-agency OSS?

I came to the OSS six weeks ago to get help with housing because my ex-partner found out where I'm living, currently he's in prison. The OSS have been amazing. I've been treated with a lot of respect and dignity. I've had help from the legal team there with getting a non-molestation order, and from the housing officer to get help with my housing.

Would you recommend the One Stop Shop?

I'd recommend the domestic abuse one stop shop to people suffering domestic violence. If I'm honest people might not realise that the one stop shop is not just for housing, it is for legal stuff, counselling, female support groups, and there's a lot of other ways you can be helped including financially if you're struggling.

What are your hopes for your future?

I just want to live a normal life with my children and not have to live in this constant state of fear and stress.

Do you have a message that you would like to share with survivors?

My message for survivors is to just keep going and to stay strong, and try to stay safe. And to focus on your mental health because it will, and it does get better. Get any support you can, like from the Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop and other agencies. There are lots of forums out there and people that you can talk to because it is a very lonely time. But it's not as lonely as you think it is, even though it feels that way sometimes.

Barnet Homes' Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop Service



An advice drop-in service for all genders

Our partner agencies (family law and immigration solicitors, housing advisor, anti-social behaviour officer, independent domestic abuse advisor and welfare benefit advisor) are providing advice, information, options, support, risk assessment and safety planning to survivors of;

- domestic abuse
- forced marriage
- honour based abuse
- sexual abuse
- sexual exploitation
- female genital mutilation (FGM)

If you or someone you know, are suffering domestic abuse, there is help available:

- In case of an emergency call the Police on **999**
- One Stop Shop Telephone line: **020 8359 7947** (open every Wednesday, Thursday & Friday)
- Barnet Homes Housing Options: **020 8610 3539**. The Housing Options Service operates an appointment only service. If you require housing assistance or wish to make an appointment, please call us on **020 8610 3539**.
- Solace Women's Aid, Independent Domestic Abuse Advice and Support provides free and confidential advice and support for women and men in Barnet. Tel: **020 3874 5003** Email: barnet.advocacy@solacewomensaid.org, Monday to Friday.
- 24- hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: **0808 2000 274**

We are here



2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale
London NW9 4EW

Open every Thursday
from 9.30am - 12.30pm

For more information call: 020 8359 7947
Phone lines are open from Wednesday - Friday

