

# Tenants' Annual Review

2019-2020



Your home



Your tenancy



Your neighbourhood



Your customer experience



Your Say,  
Services  
Your Way



COVID-19  
response



How did  
we do?

# Welcome to our review of 2019/20

**The review will let you know if we have done what we said, how we have performed against the Regulators Consumer Standards and generally let you know what has been going on at Bernicia throughout the year.**

Our involved tenants have played a significant role throughout the year in scrutinising performance, progressing plans and developing new plans for the future delivery of services, to make sure we provide services to you which remain meaningful and relevant.

We would like to say a big Thank You! to our involved tenants who again have helped in the development of this review. We do hope you like it!

You'll find lots of interesting and useful information about what's been going on over the last year.

As you'll see in the review there's been a lot of great work going on to support communities across the region and there's been added excitement as we've seen the launch of the Bernicia Foundation to help and support great causes.

Look out for the work involved tenants have been getting on with and helping out with national programs such as Together with Tenants.

There are also some facts and figures on how we have performed against each of the Consumer Standards set by our Regulator, which we have summarised in sections of the review Your home, Your tenancy, Your neighbourhood and Your customer experience.

At the end of the year we all had to come to terms with carrying out aspects of our lives in very different circumstances with COVID 19 (Coronavirus). We have included how we responded, adapted and continue to evolve our service into 2020/21 to meet and overcome challenges in unprecedented and uncertain times.

But we still need to progress our plans for the future which involve you. We will tell you more about this throughout the review and hope you take the opportunity when we get in touch as part of **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** campaign to tell us about the services you receive now and into the future.

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**We do hope you enjoy reading this review. If you have any comments, we would love to hear from you so please do get in touch, keep well and stay safe!**

# Your home

The Home Standard focuses on the provision of quality accommodation; a cost effective repairs and maintenance service; the health and safety of customers and the provision of an aids and adaptations service that meets customer needs.

## Keeping you safe

The safety of you and your family is our top priority. This is why we carry out safety checks in your home to ensure appliances meet the required safety standards.

**99.8%** of properties had a valid gas certificate. 17 properties were outstanding at the end of the year due to no access, some of these as a result of COVID 19 and tenants shielding. As soon as we are able we will ensure these are completed as a priority to keep people safe in their homes.

### Did you know?

We carry out a range of servicing, testing, inspections and assessments, to keep you safe.

- **Electrical testing**
- **Water hygiene**
- **Passenger lifts**
- **Asbestos**
- **Fire risk assessments**



**All of our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard**



Over **92%** of customers were satisfied with the repairs service



We carried out **67,068** repairs at a cost of **£10.739 million**



**93%** of appointments were made and kept



**99.1%** of emergency repairs were completed within the target time of 24 hours

# Investing in existing homes



## Revitalising Ferryhill, Durham

Taking down the old to make way for the new in Ferryhill, Durham. Demolition began on a number of properties which no longer met the needs of the community, as part of a £1 million investment programme.



## Investing in Sherburn Road, Durham

155 houses on the Sherburn Road estate had roofs replaced and fully insulated as part of an improvement scheme.



## Refurbishment programme in the heart of Hartlepool

A refurbishment programme at Central Buildings in Hartlepool, was welcomed by locals, giving one of the town's best known buildings a new lease of life as affordable homes.

# Investing in new homes

Bernicia home building is on course to deliver more than 600 new homes by 2023 for the North East including areas of Ashington, Cramlington and Sunderland. We have recently completed schemes across the region and started on site with our Roseborough development in Cramlington.

In 2019/20 we completed 75 homes, these include a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties.



## Roseborough

Work started on site just off Cramlington town centre to build 60 units of two bedroom retirement accommodation with a range of flexible care options to enable people to retain their independence.

The development will feature 48 apartments, as well as 4 Tyneside flats and 8 bungalows.



This year we invested  
**£9.8 million in 135 new homes**

# Your tenancy

The Tenancy Standard focuses on the way homes are allocated and how customers are supported to maintain their tenancy.



95.6% of customers were satisfied with the lettings service



We let **1279** homes in 2019/20

## Allocating homes

### Partnership working in Hartlepool, Schooner Court

Listening to feedback and working with tenants, a plan was developed to improve the appeal of the scheme. By working with the local authority and community, improvements have been made to transport links from Schooner Court to local amenities. This along with increased promotion of the scheme resulted in a number of successful lettings and a 'Full House' at Schooner Court.

The scheme has also benefitted from full redecoration along with new flooring, signage and furniture to deliver high standard finishes as recognised in all Bernicia's Retirement Housing schemes.



## Partnership working

**Northumberland Community Bank is an ethical, not for profit Community Bank providing simple loans and a safe place for savings. Bernicia pays the opening fee for tenants, to access banking services from a reputable provider.**

Keith joins over 50 tenants and staff who are already saving with Northumberland Community Bank.



Average re-let time was **47.5 days**. Whilst this did not meet target it was caused due to the success of letting long term empty properties

# Rents

**We set our rents in line with government regulations which saw a further decrease for the fourth year running.**

- Average Rent **£75.68**
- Rent Collection - **we exceeded target for rent collection**, with 100.31% collected, this means £1,101,333 was collected above our annual target.

As people transitioned to Universal Credit (UC) we have seen an increase of 1700 cases since

1 April 2019. We do receive Direct Payments for 566 of the UC claimants. This is 19% of all our UC cases.

We provide advice and support to tenants to help claim benefits they may be entitled to.

This year we had 75 evictions (89% due to rent arrears). This is always a last resort and our priority is to work with our tenants to keep their homes. Unfortunately, due to rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, we sometimes have to take action.

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## Supporting people in their tenancies

We want to make sure our new and existing tenants can manage in their homes and for people who need extra support, our Intensive Housing Management Team are available to offer help and advice.

**During this year:**



**505 referrals for support** were received



**483 cases** were closed



**72%** of cases closed had a positive outcome



**£111,517** was secured by the team in financial gains for our tenants



**373** customers found a new home in our sheltered and supported housing schemes to help them live independently

# Your neighbourhood

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard focuses on the cleanliness and safety of neighbourhoods and communal areas, the promotion of social environmental and economic wellbeing, and the prevention and tackling of anti-social behaviour (ASB).



**604** anti-social behaviour cases were reported and responded to

## Estate clean ups

Tenants helped by Bernicia's Housing and Estate teams worked together with Northumberland County Council's 'Clean and Green Team' and road sweepers to give The Churches estate in Ashington a spring clean.



**90%** of anti-social behaviour cases were successfully resolved



**7** anti-social behaviour cases related to a hate crime



**93.1%** of customers were satisfied with the anti-social behaviour service



**196** estate inspections carried out by our housing team

# Your community

As well as providing good quality homes, we help shape the places around those homes and support communities that live in them.

## Community investment fund

Over the past 12 months we have supported 34 local projects with Bernicia Community Grants, awarding communities and initiatives amounts between £100 and £13,600 to the total of £42,509.10. Projects include:



Apprentices created an outdoor kitchen and enchanted garden at Ashington Primary School. Bernicia has 20 ongoing apprenticeships, including 9 joining us in 2019/20.



Friday night football sessions continue at Kicks Berwick. Participants have been collecting football boots as part of a social action project to help those who don't have suitable footwear to take part in physical activity.



Bishop Auckland Cadets marched out in style on 'Three Bridge Challenge', with a Bernicia grant contribution towards their kit.



Clennel House saw blossoming plants and friendships grow with the help of a small community grant award.

## Get in touch...

**Do you know of or are you part of a community group, charity or partner agency who has an idea for a community project that will enhance the lives of our residents and their communities?**

If so, we'd like to hear about it. You can contact our Customer Engagement team at [customer.engagement@bernicia.com](mailto:customer.engagement@bernicia.com) or by telephone on **0344 800 3800**

# Supporting employment

## North of Tyne Working Homes

North of Tyne Working Homes is an innovative large scale employment support programme based on a partnership between housing providers, learning providers and local authorities that work north of the River Tyne.



The project has been gaining momentum throughout its first year proving it is an excellent way to help those struggling to find a job, into employment. It provides the means to gain qualifications, skills and confidence to enter the job market, resulting in great benefit not only to the individual, but also to the wider community. Our outcomes and contribution to the partnership are:



47 participants joined the scheme



Over 10% have gained employment through the scheme

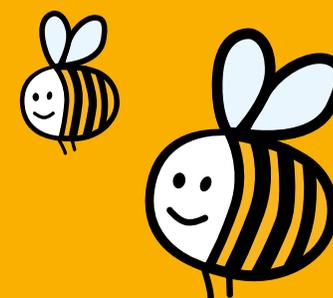


24 participants were helped with their CV

To find out more you can contact the team at [working.homes@bernicia.com](mailto:working.homes@bernicia.com) or by telephone on **0344 800 3800**.

## Learning Hives

Both the Bedlington and Newbiggin Learning Hives operate out of Bernicia properties. Run by the Northern Learning Trust charity, offering personalised learning programmes in local communities to help people find work or get back into employment.



**7000** visits to the learning hives



**6000** learning sessions delivered



**200** people took steps to employment



**75** people invited to interviews, **more than 50%** gained employment



# Supporting communities in the North East

## New £1m charitable foundation

**Launched in 2019, the Foundation helps fund projects and initiatives that deliver real and lasting community benefits and support individuals to achieve their ambitions.**

As a community focussed organisation Bernicia already deliver a range of initiatives that:

- support people to retain their independence, through social and financial inclusion initiatives
- encourage our tenants into training, volunteering and employment opportunities

- help new entrants to the workplace develop the skills and experience they need to succeed.

The Bernicia Foundation is an exciting opportunity to award grants and bursaries to individuals and organisations committed to delivering real community benefits, such as tackling loneliness, accessing employment opportunities or supporting young talent to flourish.

For more information about the Foundation and the application process go to [www.berniciafoundation.com](http://www.berniciafoundation.com) or follow us on Twitter [@BerniciaFdn](https://twitter.com/BerniciaFdn) and Facebook [@BerniciaFoundation](https://facebook.com/BerniciaFoundation)

# Your customer experience

## Liz helps Bernicia deliver services tenants want



Liz, from Spennymoor is enjoying her role as a member of the Customer Services Committee set up to work with the Bernicia board to ensure we deliver exceptional services to our tenants.

As part of National Customer Services week Liz shared her great experience as a Bernicia tenant and what it's like to live in one of our homes, fronting a short video which ran on our Twitter and LinkedIn social media accounts.



## Influencing at a national level



We are proud that one of our very own involved tenants Sheila from Newbiggin-by-the-Sea was successful in becoming a member of the National Housing Federations, Tenants Advisory Panel.

Sheila's role on the panel will be important to help advise, support and challenge the ongoing development of the Together with Tenants charter.

## Together with tenants

Bernicia tenants give the thumbs up to the National Housing Federation and it's 'Together with Tenants' charter to strengthen the relationship between housing associations and tenants.

As an early adopter, we have developed our approach and we can meet these important requirements but want to do more, so will be further developing and testing these plans with involved tenants.

## New involvement framework

A lot of hard work has been shown by our involved tenants to help and influence important areas of service delivery. To ensure this continues plans are in place to improve and build on our approach to tenant involvement by starting at the very beginning to co-design services and standards with tenants.

See our plan and check out our new engagement framework on pages 16 to 18.

# My Bernicia

## Your customer portal



77,633 calls received,  
70% answered within  
40 seconds

**We want to make sure that our services are easily accessible and to do this we are increasing the ways you can contact and do business with us.**

To date, almost 1400 people have registered on **My Bernicia** customer portal. More join them every day and see the difference it makes to their lives.

As well as enjoying the general benefits of being online - from connecting with friends and family, to learning new skills, to saving time and money on shopping - those registered with a **My Bernicia** account on the customer portal can manage areas of their account online, to make life easier in many ways.

### Currently on My Bernicia you can:



**Check rent statement**



**Request a repair**



**Make payments**



**Access customer information, leaflets and guides**

We are developing the portal and additional features coming to **My Bernicia** customer portal include:

- Report a repair
- Book a repair appointment

We want to know what you would like to see and do on **My Bernicia**, and will be contacting you as part of our **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** campaign.

## Contact and customer feedback

We like to hear from you and receive feedback on the services we provide. We focus on providing accessible customer service and choice, and a complaints process that is clear and simple.

Customer feedback is really important to us so that we can continuously improve, learn and develop our products and services.

In the last year we:



Received **1229 compliments** and **175 comments**

Received **312 complaints** with almost **50% resolved at first point of contact** and **96% resolved at first stage.**

# Update on plans for 2019/20 and plans for 2020/21



## Your home

Last year we told you that we wanted to make reporting repairs easier and simpler via a new customer portal – My Bernicia. Good news is we went live with the new portal which has increased functionality with tenants now being able to request a repair and have supported tenants to transition to this. We want you to be able to do more on the customer portal. We are still improving this and will be looking to make booking a repair appointment a priority for 2020/21.

We told you about our plans to invest £13.591 million in existing homes, we have so far invested £12.622 million.

Last year we started on site with 135 new homes and completed 75. Due to delays with planning permission and COVID 19 social distancing measures, this prevented us from starting on site and completing a further 7 properties. We will be progressing as soon as it is safe for everyone to return.

### For 2020/21 our plans include:

- Develop customer portal to include repairs appointments
- Introduce My Bernicia mobile app
- Start on site with 219 new homes and completing 93.



## Your tenancy

We planned to undertake a full review of our vacant property and letting service in 2019/20 and can advise the review was carried out by the Northern Housing Consortium.

Good news, our research into rents confirmed that they are below market rents and compare favourably to other social landlords across the region and are below the 33% Affordable Housing Commissions ratios of rent to income.

Our plan to roll out and extend employability services to our tenants as part of North of Tyne Working Home, £4.3 million project involving 8 partners, went live in April 2019.

### For 2020/21 our plans include:

- Consider recommendations for vacant property and letting service.



## Your neighbourhood

Last year we told you we were refreshing our approach to estate and communal area inspections. We're in the process of finalising a comprehensive policy that sets out how we keep areas safe, clean and tidy whilst also reflecting what tenants want to see as part of this service. This leads us into next year's plans to develop policy, consult with tenants, and progress plans for estate services to become part of housing. We are committed to ensuring estate and housing services are aligned to make best use and provide value for money.

We have carried out our estate sustainability exercise which will help direct investment to where it is needed most and we are working our way through the results to identify priorities.

We told you about plans to start on site with the remodelling of Dean Bank in Ferryhill. We can confirm demolition has commenced on site and once this is complete, we have further plans to invest within the neighbourhood with landscaped areas. We are discussing these plans with tenants, local community and stakeholders.

### For 2020/21 our plans include:

- Completion of Dean Bank, including landscaping
- Develop policy and our approach to estate and communal area inspection
- Identify priorities for investment from sustainability exercise.



## Your customer experience

As promised last year we completed our Customer Service Strategy which brings all our plans relating to customer service together.

Our plan has been developed with involved tenants and our 'Big Conversation' is ready to roll-out in 2020 as part of the new engagement framework.

As an early adopter we have tested our approach to the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Plan and Charter, and we can meet the requirements but want to do more. We will be working with involved tenants to develop plans.

### For 2020/21 our plans include:

- Hold our 'Big Conversation', **Your Say, Services Your Way**
- Fully implement new engagement framework
- Review complaints process against Housing Ombudsman Scheme.



**Our biggest plan for 2020/21 is Involving You,** see overleaf for more details

# New engagement framework



## **‘Your Say, Services Your Way’** - involving you

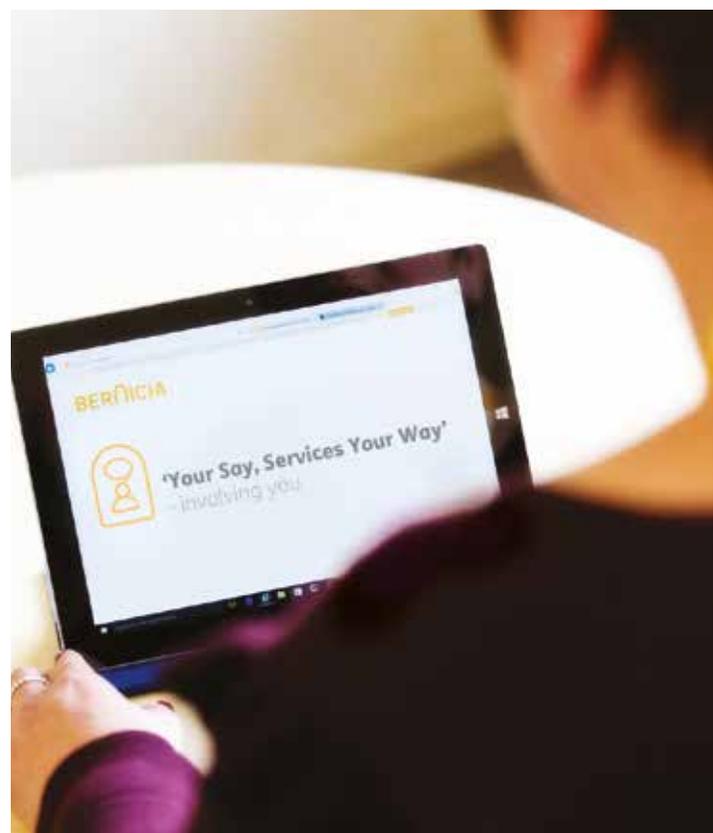
**During the last year we’ve done a lot of work with our involved tenants, staff and board and committee members to develop a way of being better at hearing and listening to what you’ve got to say. Our aim is to make sure your voice is heard right through our business.**

We now have a plan in place that will help us to improve and build on our approach to involve more people in the co-design and monitoring of the services we provide for you.

### **How will we do this?**

With you of course, the services we deliver are for you. We want you to enjoy your home and be assured you are receiving services which are relevant, meet your needs and deliver value for money.

Our new approach involves 5 stages. The first, of these, being to develop and agree a plan with our involved tenants. This is now done which means we can move onto the next stages and this is where you come in. Here’s how you can contribute.



## What?

### Your say

#### Consult, gather evidence and insight

We'll host a 'BIG' conversation. We'll be launching a campaign **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** this year and we really want to hear from you

We'll ask you about the services you receive and how they should be delivered

We'll gather all your views to find out what you are telling us

We'll then challenge ourselves to turn your views into action.

### Services your way

#### Develop service standards and local offers

We'll review our service standards – these are our promises to you so you know what to expect

We'll develop local offers that make sure we do things in ways that reflect your needs and expectations.

### Communicate with you

#### Publish and promote

All our service standards and local offers will be available via our website, My Bernicia - customer portal and in our offices and schemes.

### Do what we say

#### Deliver and monitor

We'll check that we do what we say by:

Collecting feedback

Monitoring performance

Keeping costs under control

Undertaking audits and scrutiny reviews.

#### Be accountable

We'll publish performance information

Assess our services against our Regulator's Consumer Standards

Hold an annual virtual conference to look at performance

Produce an annual report

Publish a statement of compliance.

## Who?

### With tenants

Involved tenants will help us analyse what you have told us.

### With tenants

Involved tenants will support in the development of service standards and local offers based on **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** along with the evidence and insight we've gathered.

### With tenants

Involved tenants will help guide us on how you would like us to communicate with you.

### With tenants

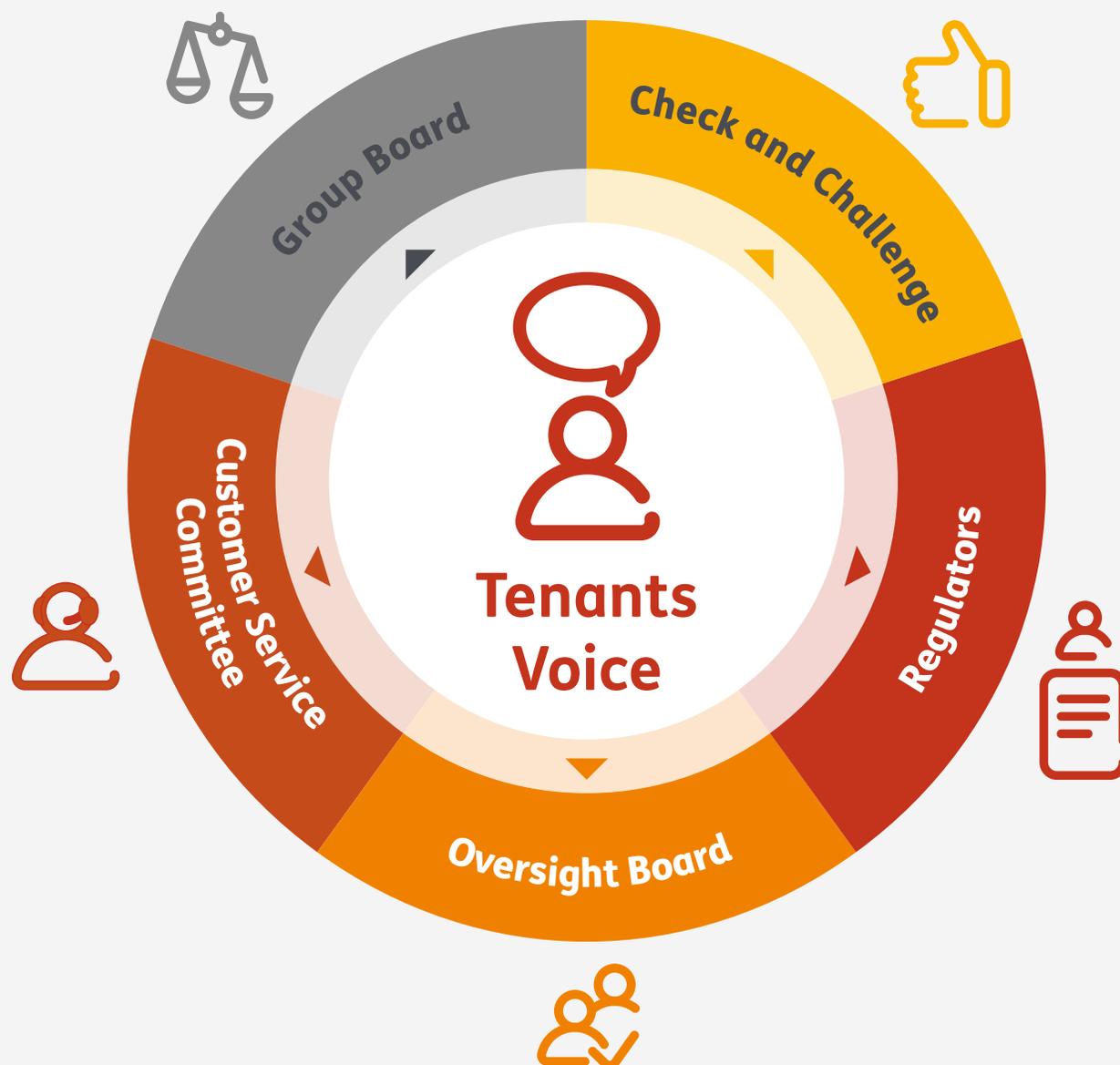
Involved tenants will monitor our services and how we are performing against the service standards and local offers, using key performance indicators, feedback analysis, scrutiny reviews and requirements of our Regulator against the Consumer Standards.

### To whom

Tenants, Customer Services Committee, Group Board and our Regulator.

Our new approach and plan developed with tenants will ensure your voice is heard throughout the organisation and listened to, making sure services reflect tenants' needs and priorities.

Your voice will be heard at each level within the organisation through the reporting mechanisms in place, as shown in our Tenants Voice structure below:



## How can you get involved?

All tenants will be able to have **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** by participating in the campaign. We will be sending you information about this. Look out for updates on our website, Facebook and Twitter for further information. Make sure your contact information for telephone, mobile and email is up to date and don't miss your opportunity to have your say.

## Want to be more involved?

If you are interested in knowing a bit more on the ways you can become involved in helping shape and monitor services, you can contact us on: **0344 800 3800** or email **[customer.engagement@bernicia.com](mailto:customer.engagement@bernicia.com)**

# How did we do?

Maintaining our performance, delivering our investment plans and continuing with good customer services continued to be our main priority for the year.

Here's what our year in numbers looked like:

■ Actual

■ Target



## Our homes

We started on site building\*  
**135** 157

New homes completed on site\*  
**75** 82

Spend on new homes\*  
**£9.8m**

\* Targets not met due to COVID 19 restrictions and planning delays, we will progress these as soon as it's safe and permissions allow us.



## Contact and feedback

Telephone calls handled  
**77,633**

Compliments received  
**1229**

Complaints made  
**312**

Complaints resolved at first stage  
**96%**

% complaints upheld or partly upheld  
**69%**

Number of learnings as an outcome from complaints  
**200**



## Income

Rent collected  
**100.31%** 98.75%

Current rent arrears  
**3.67%** 3.75%

Rent lost through empty properties  
**1.94%** 2.25%



## Lettings

Properties relet  
**1279** -

Average time taken to relet a property\*  
**47.5 days** 36

% of new tenants satisfied with overall lettings service  
**95.6%** 93%

\*we successfully let long term empty properties which affected the time to relet.



## Repairs

Repairs completed  
**67,086** -

Cost of repairs  
**£10,739,341** -

Appointments made and kept  
**93%** 92%

Average days to complete a repair  
**9.05 Days** 9 Days

Average cost of repair  
**£169.58** £134

Emergency repairs attended to within 24 hours  
**99.1%** 99.5%

Satisfied with repairs service  
**92.93%** 92%

Repair cost per property  
**£1,105** -



## Planned maintenance

All properties meet Decent Homes Standard  
**100%**

Kitchens renewed  
**467**

Bathrooms renewed  
**298**

Roofs coverings and canopies fitted  
**317**

Heating systems replaced or upgraded  
**252**

Electrical upgrades completed  
**1137**

Windows and doors installed  
**49**

Number of wet rooms installed as part of improvement works  
**204**



## Health and safety

Properties with a valid gas safety certificate at the end of the year  
**99.86%\*** 100%

\* Due to no access 17 properties did not have a gas certificate.

Properties had electrical inspections  
**99.7%**

Water hygiene inspections carried out  
**99.37%**

Properties had fire risk assessments  
**96.4%**

Communal areas re-inspected for asbestos  
**98.57%**



## Benefits to our tenants and communities

**£42,509**  
invested in community initiatives

**£111,517**  
Additional income and grants secured for tenants

**9**  
Apprenticeships created

**659**  
Aids and Adaptations installed

# Value for money

**We want to provide the best possible homes and services to tenants for the money paid in rent and service charges.**

We aim to keep rents affordable, properties maintained, estates well managed and services accessible and responsive to meet your needs.

We reviewed our rents in 2019/20 and found that these are below market rent and compare favourably against other social landlords across the region.

2019/20 saw the fourth year of the 1% rent reduction which meant average weekly rents were:

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1 bedroom | <b>£66.51</b> |
| 2 bedroom | <b>£74.35</b> |
| 3 bedroom | <b>£80.98</b> |
| 4 bedroom | <b>£91.26</b> |
| 5 bedroom | <b>£92.65</b> |



## Savings for you through energy efficient homes

The average SAP (Standard Assessment Performance) rating for our properties is 71.35 which demonstrates a good level of thermal efficiency and is also above the government's target of 69 for average SAP ratings by 2030.

We also have good levels of customer satisfaction which meet targets set, across our services.



Average Rent  
**£75.68**



**89%**  
of tenants,  
satisfied that  
their rent provides  
value for money

# Our financial performance

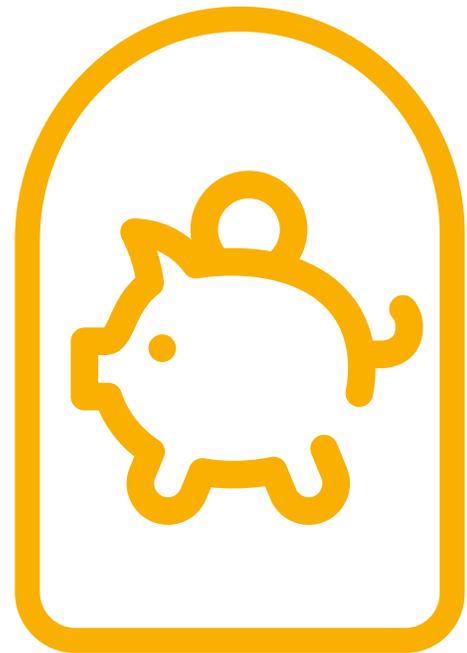
## Income and expenditure

Last year was the final year of the 1% rent reduction. Despite this we have remained financially strong with a healthy cash surplus for reinvestment.

Here is what we collected (income) and what we spent (expenditure) during 2019/20.

| <b>What comes in</b>          | <b>£000's</b> | <b>What goes out</b>  | <b>£000's</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Rents                         | 53,867        | Salaries              | 10,623        |
| Service charges               | 6,019         | Routine maintenance   | 9,732         |
| Water rates commission        | 440           | Planned maintenance   | 2,589         |
| Other income                  | 1,182         | Major repairs         | 11,458        |
| Sale of internal services     | 137           | Housing management    | 4,907         |
| Surplus on the sale of assets | 756           | Overhead costs        | 5,258         |
| Office rental income          | 178           | Other costs           | 1,162         |
| <b>Income</b>                 | <b>62,579</b> | Loan interest charges | 6,680         |
|                               |               | <b>Expenditure</b>    | <b>52,409</b> |
|                               |               | <b>Cash surplus</b>   | <b>10,170</b> |

# How each penny in every pound was spent



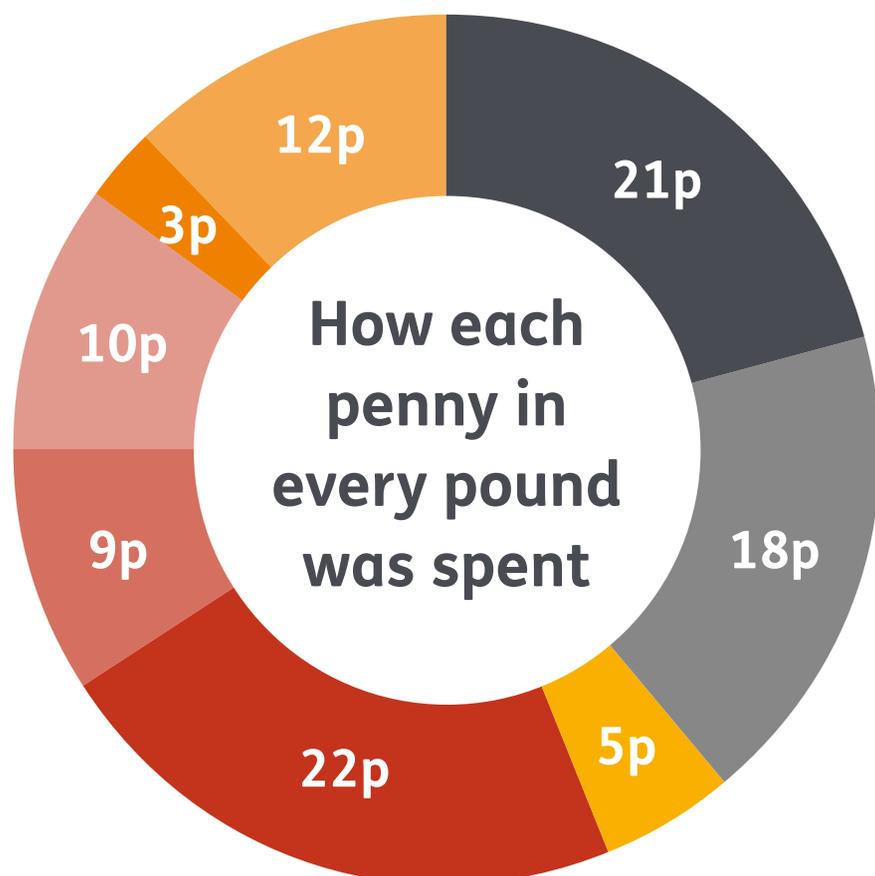
In addition to being financially strong, we are well governed with the highest rating of Governance (G1) and Viability (V1) as assessed by our Regulator.



2019/20 turnover  
**£69,127 million**

How each penny in every pound was spent:

- Salaries**
- Routine maintenance**
- Planned maintenance**
- Major repairs**
- Housing management**
- Overhead costs**
- Other costs**
- Loan interest charges**



# A year in review... how did we do?



## Our involved tenants would know this, so we asked them....

### Home:

**It's great to see Bernicia have continued their commitment to building new homes as well as investing in existing properties and communities.**

We can see Bernicia fully understands that good quality housing is fundamental in providing the reassurance and stability people and families need to live their lives feeling safe and happy in their home.

It's pleasing to see that Bernicia is committed to continuing to invest in existing and new

homes and services and we are confident that Bernicia will aim to deliver on its plans for 2020/21 despite the current situation. This remains important to us and for future tenants.

We've had access to good quality information, including on health and safety, which provides assurance that homes are well maintained, tenants are kept safe and legal requirements are met.

### Tenancy:

**We're pleased to report that good performance has been achieved and maintained by Bernicia over this last year.**

Whilst remaining financially strong, as expected Universal Credit has risen but it's apparent that staff have worked hard to keep on top of rent collection. We receive a wide variety of performance information throughout the year to allow us to discuss

and monitor how things are going within the business.

This enables us to hold Bernicia to account and look at service areas which could be improved for customers. We'll continue to grow our positive relationship with Bernicia to help improve services for the wider customer base.

## Neighbourhood:

**Bernicia make a fantastic difference to tenants and communities with the amount it invests in social value projects, programmes and initiatives.**

We enjoy being part of the decision making process and seeing the outcomes of the projects that are funded by Bernicia. It is always encouraging to hear the feedback and

appreciation of the groups and residents who have benefited.

Employability initiatives and housing support to help people manage in their tenancy and improve life skills have achieved some fantastic results, by helping to support individuals which also positively effects the community they live.

## Customer experience:

**We can see from the satisfaction results that Bernicia continues to deliver excellent customer focused services to its tenants and meet service standards throughout the business.**

This tells us that Bernicia listens and takes on board feedback from tenants to develop and

deliver services which are relevant.

Helping to influence and inform services and standards is invaluable, we are looking forward to analysing tenant feedback from the **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** campaign in the coming year.

## In summary

**The momentous challenge of delivering services due to lockdown restrictions at the end of 2019/20 due to COVID 19 were unprecedented. This saw Bernicia make changes to the way they do things to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus, whilst also ensuring that critical and essential services continued to be delivered.**

Working differently during this time and as we all come out of lockdown, we'll reflect to see how this experience can be used

positively to help shape the future delivery of services.

In concluding the review of 2019/20, from our involvement through the year and the performance and information we've monitored and scrutinised along with our ability to challenge, we are satisfied that Bernicia has performed very well and has fully complied with the Regulator's requirements, meeting its service standards and delivering on local offers.

## Priorities

**We will focus on the following main priorities in 2020/21:**

- We'll continue our work on the resumption of services as things start to return to normal
- We're looking forward to reviewing the feedback from **'Your Say, Services Your Way'** campaign and setting up the new co regulatory framework;

- We'll work with Bernicia to refresh local offers and service standards
- Hopefully the Housing White Paper will finally be published and we'll pick up what's needed along with overseeing the Together with Tenants Charter and the requirements of the new Housing Ombudsman Service.

# Our response to COVID 19

Near the end of the year we saw our services and lives affected in a way we could never have imagined. The country was placed into lockdown due to COVID 19. During this period we looked to adapt our service offer to keep tenants and staff safe.

## Staff

With offices closed, staff have been adapting to working at home and continuing their hard work to deliver great results, as can be demonstrated through compliments received from our tenants during lockdown.

Some of our staff pets wanted to help too:



## Tenants

Playing their crucial part also, our involved tenants are adapting to new ways of customer engagement, embracing this experience using digital methods.

As we write this report, involved tenants have helped Bernicia draw up plans to resume the full range of services it offers as restrictions are eased.

All of this has helped to inform how customer engagement will develop going forward.

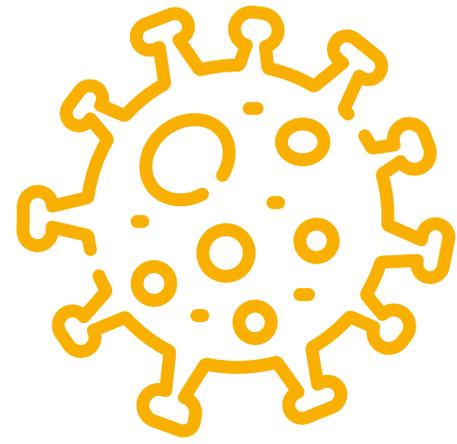
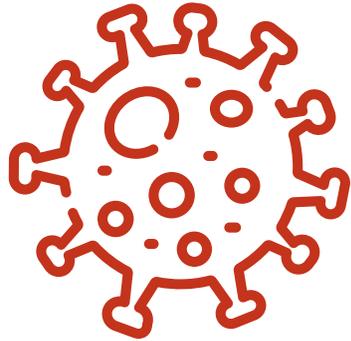
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## Services

We changed the way we worked to deliver critical and essential services such as emergency repairs, gas safety checks and 24 hour telecare and warden support for vulnerable people in retirement accommodation.

While some tenants are surprised at the protective steps Bernicia employees are taking to keep people safe in their properties during the outbreak of Covid 19, many are also genuinely appreciative of the work they are doing in the most trying of circumstances.

“ Thanks for your support, the difference this has made to my well-being and the worry it has taken away for my family is huge. ”



## Partnership working

**Bowmont House extra care scheme, continued to provide essential care services for tenants.**

Sporting Chance gave a helping hand providing regular food donations for tenants at the scheme instead of their normal sporting activities.

Their generosity and support was gratefully appreciated by tenants and staff.



**THE  
BERNICIA  
FOUNDATION**

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## Communities

**Bernicia's Foundation set up to support communities across the North East injected a cash boost of £200,000 to help local charities and organisations tackle hardship caused by Coronavirus.**



You can be assured that  
Bernicia will be there for  
you into 2020/21



**Stay  
alert**



**Control  
the virus**



**Save  
lives**

**Stay safe everyone!**

**For up to date advice and guidance  
go to [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)**

**BERNICIA**

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