



# Private Sector Housing Plan 2030

Homes in Barnsley are safe, warm and sustainable, and people feel invested in and connected to their home and local community.

**Barnsley - the place of possibilities**



**BARNSELY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

# 1. Introduction

**Barnsley Council is committed to ensuring that our residents can live in good quality homes that provide safe, warm, and healthy environments and meet acceptable energy efficiency and safety standards.**

We recognise that suitable housing is essential for people to live well and thrive. We aim to make sure that homes in the private sector are safe, well managed and well maintained, and that tenants can enjoy their homes free from poor behaviour of others that can negatively impact on their health and wellbeing. Our plan outlines the Council's approach to regulating and enhancing private sector housing for all our current and future residents to ensure we are doing everything we can to raise and maintain housing standards in Barnsley, irrespective of tenure, location or occupancy. Its purpose is to galvanise all key stakeholders to contribute and be accountable for delivering our key priorities, which will support the broader strategic ambitions for Barnsley. It focuses mainly on private rented housing but also considers owner-occupiers and some Registered Providers where the Council has a duty to regulate housing, environmental or behavioural standards.

Many of the inequalities already existing in the sector have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this plan we consider the challenges we face as we begin to recover and set out our ambitions for mitigating the lasting impacts of the pandemic on our tenants, residents and Landlords.





## 2. Our Ambition

**Our ambition for Barnsley residents living in the private sector is that homes are safe, warm and sustainable, and people feel invested in and connected to their home and local community.**

We will achieve this by working proactively and collaboratively to regulate standards and discharge our statutory duties, supporting Landlords, tenants and Letting Agents and encouraging fairness and equality across the sector. We acknowledge that dealing with housing conditions in isolation will not support us to achieve our ambition, and therefore, a more holistic approach is required. This includes how we tackle poverty (including fuel poverty), housing-related anti-social behaviour, vulnerability and neglect, social exclusion and isolation, neighbour nuisance and environmental crime and blight.

This plan supports and builds on the strategic ambitions of the Barnsley 2030 vision – Barnsley, the place of possibilities. It contributes towards the corporate priorities of a healthy, learning, growing and sustainable Barnsley. We are committed to continuously reviewing and improving the private sector housing services we deliver by working with partners, other public bodies, residents, Landlords and Registered Providers. Making sure that homes meet or exceed required health, safety and energy efficiency standards means that residents can live well and thrive in safe, clean environments within pleasant, welcoming neighbourhoods.

Several teams across the Council have responsibility for delivering services that contribute towards keeping our residents safe, warm and healthy in their homes. We will work together with all our colleagues and wider partners from statutory services and the community and voluntary sector to achieve our ambition.



### 3. National and local considerations

**Nationally, the private rented sector is the fastest-growing housing tenure type, having more than doubled in size over the last decade.**

With the gradual decline of social rented stock, this growth means that private renting is increasingly becoming the primary option for addressing housing need across the country. One of the critical aspects of our work within the private sector is to ensure that homes are safe places to live. Alongside the sector's rapid growth, it is important to understand the ever-changing dynamics in our residential areas and acknowledge the different Landlord types. This allows the Council to respond flexibly to changing demands and pressures.

When problems causing a health and safety implication are identified in rented properties, the Landlord will be required to put things right or otherwise face enforcement action. This action would follow guidance from the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). In 2020, the Council commissioned a private sector stock condition survey of all residential property in Barnsley, which was carried out by Building Research Establishment (BRE). This data shows us there are an estimated 114,171 dwellings in Barnsley, 68,972 (60%) of which are owner-occupied, 21,483 (19%) private rented and 23,716 (21%) social rented. In line with the national picture, the number of private rented dwellings in Barnsley has more than doubled since the last stock survey was carried out in 2010, while owner-occupied properties have reduced by 9%.







An estimated 17% of all private sector housing across the Borough contains at least one serious health and safety hazard. This rises to 19% when considering private rented housing alone. As the Local Housing Authority, Barnsley Council has a statutory duty to regulate housing conditions in the sector and do all it can to ensure health and safety standards are maintained. Cold homes are a significant contributory factor to excess winter deaths, and this continues to be a priority for the Council and concern for our key partners. The BRE report highlighted the estimated impact on the NHS and Barnsley residents living in poor quality housing by analysing the effects of Category 1 hazards identified.

Figures from the report estimate there are 1,527 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), with an estimate of 171 requiring mandatory licensing. Any rented property with three or more people living across two or more households and sharing common facilities is classed as an HMO. If the property has five or more people living across two or more households and sharing common facilities, it is classed as a large HMO and must be mandatorily licensed. There has been a rise in the number of HMO in Barnsley in recent years, and this rise has generated significant local concern in some areas.

The national statistics also show a rise in empty homes. Barnsley Council works with owners, businesses and others to explore all options for bringing these properties back into residential occupation. Where we cannot work with owners to reinstate their property, we will take the appropriate enforcement action to ensure the property meets all required standards. The risks of leaving premises empty for any extended length of time include vandalism, squatters, deterioration in condition and value and complaints from neighbours. Empty homes also contribute towards a neighbourhood's appearance and can be an indicator and cause of wider decline. Additionally, as there are housing shortages both nationally and locally, existing stock must be utilised where possible.



## 4. Our Commitments

Here we set out how we intend to achieve our ambition for private sector housing with our **four key commitments**.



# Commitment 1

Ensuring that housing standards and living conditions in Barnsley are of good quality and contribute towards better health outcomes for all.

Healthy homes promote good physical and mental health and increase the prospects of people living well for longer. Good health depends on having homes that are safe, warm and free from physical hazards. It is also important that the accommodation is stable and suitable for the needs of the occupier. In contrast, poor quality and inadequate housing can contribute to health problems such as chronic diseases and injuries, increase health inequalities, and have harmful effects on childhood development. Evidence supports that cold homes contribute towards excess winter deaths and illness. Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are exacerbated by poor quality housing, overcrowding and affordability. Making modifications to improve a home can lead to enhanced health and wellbeing that benefits the individual and brings more comprehensive social and economic benefits. As well as physical housing conditions, environmental blight and anti-social behaviour can all influence the way people feel about where they live.

Healthy  
Barnsley



To achieve our Healthy Barnsley commitment, we will:

- Raise awareness of hidden harm and vulnerability in owner-occupied and private rented housing by developing strong and supportive community networks to recognise the risk factors relating to poverty, loneliness, isolation or those affected by self-neglect or hoarding.
- Link housing improvement priorities to public health and wider social care agendas across the system to address inequalities leading to poorer health outcomes.
- Work proactively and collaboratively to identify and safeguard our most vulnerable residents, using the right interventions at the right time.
- Deliver a long-term support and monitoring service for residents affected by self-neglect and/or hoarding to increase the chances of sustaining positive changes.
- Provide various ways to make accessing support services easy for professionals and members of the public to report concerns about a person's home environment, aiming for a single point of access.
- Proactively target resources towards areas with the lowest healthy life expectancy, highest levels of deprivation and least energy-efficient homes.
- Use our duties and powers as the Local Housing Authority to regulate housing conditions, anti-social behaviour and environmental blight, so people are safe and feel safe in their homes.

## Commitment 2

To do all we can to make sure those residents who are hardest to reach or vulnerable know how to access support, understand how they can contribute and know their rights and responsibilities.

The most vulnerable residents are those least likely to reach out for support and assistance when things go wrong. This is especially so for owner-occupiers who may not consider the Council can support them where they are coping with significant disrepair or squalid living conditions that they are unable to rectify themselves. Poor quality or unsuitable accommodation can also prevent people living independently in their home for longer and force unnecessary displacement, away from familiar surroundings. Many deteriorating situations in private rented housing stem from tenants and Landlords not understanding their rights and responsibilities or not having the ability or capacity to exercise those rights. We believe that suitable, safe and sustainable accommodation for everyone is a right, not a reward, and is the foundation against which people can achieve positive life outcomes. Ensuring those with the most challenging and complex needs can sustain stable housing is seen as key to achieving more cohesive neighbourhoods in our town.

Learning  
Barnsley



To achieve our Learning Barnsley commitment, we will:

- Operate an Accredited Landlord Scheme, offering training, advice and guidance and incentivising fair and decent Landlords to manage well-maintained homes for their tenants.
- Make opportunities to engage with appropriate groups and forums to ensure tenants and Landlords know and understand their respective rights and responsibilities, promoting fairness and mutual respect.
- Make every contact count where access is granted to a home. We will do this by ensuring we are considering the health, wellbeing and needs of each member of the household as well as assessing the physical housing standards and the environmental conditions in the locality.
- Work proactively to address the prevention and reversal of neighbourhood decline, targeting the areas with the highest levels of environmental crime and blight and tailoring our approaches to best meet the needs of the area.
- Support our residents to access suitable, timely help (including relevant aids and adaptations), tailored to meet their needs and enabling them to live independently in their homes for longer.
- Work in partnership with other organisations to safeguard adults and support them to stop or prevent harm or abuse within their own homes.
- Develop educational material in different languages and easy-read formats to support residents with responsible household waste management and increase the take-up of recycling.



## Commitment 3

To value the contribution of the private rented sector in meeting our housing needs, supporting good Landlords and dealing robustly with those who act unlawfully.

We recognise that the private rented sector is a growing and necessary tenure to meet the Borough's housing needs. To this extent, it is essential that we work closely with and support Landlords in providing the best possible range of accommodation for their tenants. The majority of Landlords act with fairness and decency towards their tenants and those in the neighbourhoods of the homes they own. They maintain high standards of accommodation and manage their properties well, complying with the requirements of the law. We also rely on some Landlords to accept more challenging tenants, offering safe, suitable accommodation to those who may otherwise be homeless. However, a small number of Landlords completely disregard their duties and responsibilities towards their tenants and carry out unlawful actions. Their interest in Barnsley properties is often limited to generating a rental income with little or no investment in the property, tenants or wider residents and communities. The private sector is also becoming increasingly responsible for providing supported accommodation, often to those with the most challenging and complex needs. The Council has a role to play in ensuring such accommodation is well managed and does not negatively impact other tenants and residents living in the area. Barnsley Council has a crucial role in driving up housing standards in the private sector, and as such, we will focus our resources on those areas with the most insufficient housing stock and the least adequate property management.

**Growing  
Barnsley**



To achieve our Growing Barnsley commitment, we will:

- Proactively investigate unlicensed HMO to ensure compliance with all health and safety standards and ensure all HMO are strictly regulated and licensed where appropriate, helping to promote cohesive and tolerant communities.
- Develop a charter of standards for registered landlords operating supported housing in the private sector and incentivising those providing a good quality offer to tenants and the wider community.
- Tackle the complex and challenging issues arising from 'exempt accommodation', defined as shared accommodation for vulnerable people that isn't commissioned under Council Homelessness or Social Care funding.
- Ensure the relevant services consider the specific dynamics of each neighbourhood and create bespoke delivery plans and approaches to prevent and reverse decline according to neighbourhood need.
- Take consistently robust enforcement action against 'Rogue Landlord' activity. This includes where a Landlord (or a person acting on their behalf) operates in an unlawful way to evict tenants, allows or encourages overcrowding or demonstrates a disregard for their tenants' safety by failing to carry out necessary repairs.
- Make sure that services work together to consider the most suitable housing solutions for children, young people and families in crisis.
- Periodically consider and review the requirement for additional and selective licensing.

## Commitment 4

Ensuring all areas, neighbourhoods and streets in Barnsley, irrespective of housing tenure or type, are places where people want to live and are proud to live.

A good mix of housing types and tenures is vital for creating sustainable communities and meeting the Borough's housing needs. It is important that all our residential areas feel welcoming and safe and are locations where people are more likely to be invested in their homes and neighbourhoods. A significant factor in neighbourhood decline is locations that attract more transient occupation and where rooms or properties are let out on a short-term basis. Whilst this type of accommodation meets the housing needs of some in our community, a proliferation of more transient short-term living makes it less likely that people will form connections to their local area and feel any ownership or investment in it. A high turnover of tenancies can also lead to a decline in standards, outward migration of more established residents and a spiral of decline. This can also impact the desirability of properties and locations and tension between more settled and more transient residents. HMO and other shared accommodation may be the most suitable choice for some people where their housing needs may be short term or where affordability may be an issue. Barnsley Council believes that whilst there is a place for this type of accommodation, the quantity and quality should be regulated effectively to ensure our streets and neighbourhoods don't fall into irreversible decline. Empty homes can similarly lead to deterioration and attract blight, criminality, and community tension. Keeping the numbers and clusters of empty homes to a minimum is essential if we are to sustain healthy and thriving streets and estates. It is also the case that those living in deprived areas in the least energy-efficient homes are likely to be those living in fuel poverty. This can contribute to poor health outcomes for residents, the deterioration of general standards, and broader housing instability. Improving domestic energy efficiency will help Barnsley meet its zero carbon 2040/45 commitments, reduce carbon emissions, and protect residents from harmful effects of climate change, including extreme heat, cold, and flooding.

## Sustainable Barnsley



To achieve our Sustainable Barnsley commitment, we will:

- Regulate energy efficiency standards in private rented housing to ensure tenants can enjoy warm, affordable homes and to reduce fuel poverty and cold-related morbidity and mortality.
- Promote reusable energy efficiency and warm homes schemes to support Landlords in meeting their obligations.
- Deliver a liaison service to mediate between tenants and Landlords at the earliest signs of a failing tenancy to reduce the risk of homelessness.
- Deliver a tenancy support service to assist tenants and equip them with the skills required to manage and sustain a tenancy successfully.
- Support the retrofitting of our existing properties to make sure they protect residents from the harmful effects of climate change and that carbon emissions are reduced.
- Deal efficiently and effectively with empty homes to bring them back into residential use.
- Implement an Article 4 Direction requiring planning permission to convert existing residential dwellings into HMO. This will strengthen our powers to regulate the numbers, sizes and types of HMO in our communities.





**Thank you** for reading.

To find out more email: [safer@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:safer@barnsley.gov.uk)

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