



Date: 12 January 2024

Dear resident,

Barton House residents' update – Friday, 12 January

Many thanks to those of you who joined us in City Hall on Wednesday morning for the latest update on Barton House. I was grateful to meet with you all and hear your questions and concerns and I hope you found the meeting useful.

We have tried to take on board all of your feedback and we want to make sure you have a clearer understanding of the work taking place at Barton House and what this means for you, your family, and your return to the building.

Building safety: One of the most common concerns at Wednesday's meeting was whether Barton House is safe to return to. I want to reassure you the results from the reports sent to us by the contractors show the building is considerably safer than initially indicated in November. Once works have been carried out to improve this further, we are confident that the building will be safe for you to return to. We expect to receive the final report on all works from the engineers by the end of January, and we will share with you as soon as possible, along with more information about work taking place and how this will enhance the building's safety.

Rehousing applications: Some of you have already asked what your options are for not returning to Barton House. I understand your concerns and sympathise with the difficult position all residents of Barton House are currently in. I hope that when we've provided information relating to the safety of Barton House, the impending improvement works, and the reports we expect to be provided shortly, you will have the confidence to return to your home when it is safe to do so.

We currently have 22,000 households on the housing waiting list, and some 1,500 in temporary accommodation. We have a fair and equitable system and process, so cannot make any promises about the availability of alternative housing, particularly alternative social housing. The pressure on council housing across the city is as intense as it has ever been and although we are taking many steps to increase the amount of housing available for people who need it, the list of people requiring support is growing quicker than we can add new homes to our stock.

We plan to offer one-to-one sessions with officers who can support you if you'd like to submit a rehousing application. They can ensure that we've fully captured all of the information needed for your application, including ensuring that your banding is correct. We will share more information about these sessions in future resident letters. For more information on rehousing please [contact Home Choice Bristol](#).

Damp and mould: The focus of the repairs is to complete the remediation works recommended by specialist independent experts regarding structural and fire safety of the building. However, dealing with damp and mould problems remains a high priority. The council's repairs teams will have various teams to focus on small repairs that can be completed on the day you move back into Barton House. This may include socket and light replacement, leaking taps or pipes, and mould washing.

For more complex repairs that may be causing damp and mould, there will be several surveying staff on hand to inspect, diagnose and make a plan to tackle the issue. This may involve increasing ventilation if needed. We are aware that there are damp issues in different parts of the block and this issue is being taken seriously as part of the longer-term future of the building.

The future of Barton House: At the residents' meeting earlier this week, you asked us whether Barton House would be demolished. Back in November this was one of the options we were considering when we thought the building may not have been constructed properly. However, the updated report findings mean that demolition is not necessary now as Barton House is significantly safer than the initial evidence indicated, and it will be safe to return to once our additional works have been completed. The structural improvements we are carrying out to the steel bars and walls, as well as adding a new fire alarm system, mean the building will be safe for you to return to. Once we have completed this work we can focus on getting you back to your homes. With that said, we recognise the age of the building and that its long-term future will need to be considered, in line with our city-wide Estate Regeneration programme.

Children's mental health and wellbeing: A concern raised by some of you was around mental health and wellbeing support for residents, in particular children and young people. I understand that the last few months have been stressful and disruptive for you, and we want to make sure we support you as best we can.

We intend to work with colleagues within educational settings, such as schools, to provide additional mental health and wellbeing support and will be calling on the expertise of psychologists to provide this.

Mental health of adults: Two local organisations, the Nilaari Agency and the Somali Resource Centre (SRC), can provide excellent support for your mental health. Based on your feedback at Wednesday's residents' meeting, they are now working together to offer a programme of support for Barton House residents.

From Monday 15 January, representatives from Nilaari and the SRC will be at the Holiday Inn for three hours a day:

- Monday: 9.30am to 12:30pm
- Tuesday: 9.30am to 12:30pm
- Wednesday: 12pm to 3pm
- Thursday: 12pm to 3pm
- Friday: 9.30am to 12:30pm

In the meantime, if you need support, please do not hesitate to contact them:

- Nilaari Agency: 0117 952 5742 www.nilaari.co.uk
- Somali Resource Centre: 0117 907 7994 www.somalicentre.org.uk

There are details about other organisations who can provide support at the bottom of

this letter.

Translations: Our communications are available in English, Arabic, Pashto, and Somali. These are shared with you via email, the website (www.bristol.gov.uk/barton-house) and in print through Housing Officers. If you need other translations or help to interpret our updates, please do get in touch with your Housing Officer or colleagues from our community team.

Booking taxis in advance: We offer a free taxi service for journeys to essential locations like school, work, medical appointments, or visiting Barton House to collect essential items.

There can sometimes be a short wait to get through to the helpline. To avoid delays we'd recommend booking taxis in advance as far as possible. For example, if you need to book an early morning taxi the best thing to do would be to book it the night before. After listening to the feedback given by residents at the meeting this week, we have also now made it possible to block book taxis in advance for more regular journeys.

To book a taxi, you should call our helpline on 0800 694 0184. Please don't call the taxi companies directly as taxis are only free if you book through the helpline.

Post redirections: Royal Mail has confirmed that from tomorrow, post will start being delivered to Barton House again.

Communications: We continue to listen to you and we want to hear the feedback you have. Where we need to make any changes or put in place specific support, we will do so using your feedback to guide us. You can direct any questions or concerns to us by emailing barton.house@bristol.gov.uk, calling 0800 694 0184 or by speaking to a member of staff.

Yours sincerely



John Smith
Interim Executive Director, Growth and Regeneration

Additional support

We appreciate that this is a stressful time for you and your families, and we are working to put in place the support you need. If you feel you need some mental health and emotional wellbeing support, there are services available to help you.

- Samaritans offer support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 116 123 for free.

- Shout 85258 offers confidential text support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Text SHOUT to 85258.
- If you need advice or have any concerns around any form of **domestic abuse**, please contact the Next Link Domestic Abuse Service on 0117 925 0680. For 24 hours a day, seven days a week advice, as well as out of hours refuge options, call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247. In an emergency, please contact 999.
- **Family Hubs:** During the week, your local Family Hub can give information and support about anything relating to you and your family. This includes activity groups, health and wellbeing services as well as parenting support. The nearest Family Hub to Barton House is the Wellspring Settlement Hub, 43 Ducie Road, Bristol, BS5 0AX. Groups taking place this week:
 - Barton Hill High-Rise Homes Group on Wednesdays – 10am until 11.30am
 - Baby hub with Infant Feeding Support on Fridays – 1pm until 2.30pm

Welcoming Spaces network: Welcoming Spaces are still open across the city. These are free to use and open to anyone. You can use your local Welcoming Space to meet with other people, take part in activities or access support. Find your nearest on our website: www.bristol.gov.uk/costofliving