



**Date** Monday 19 February 2024

Dear Resident,

### **Barton House residents' update – Monday 19 February**

I want to thank you for your understanding and patience over the last few incredibly difficult months. We are grateful to all residents who have worked with us to allow access to properties, so we could complete the remedial work, and helped to make sure we remained on track for the planned return to your home.

**Survey reports now available:** As mentioned in last week's letter, we are now able to publish, in full, various building survey reports from Ridge and Partners LLP and Arup. These reports, together with assurance from Avon Fire and Rescue Service and our thorough assessment of the report findings, **confirm that Barton House is safe for you to return to** from Tuesday 20 February 2024.

Recommendations made within these reports have been followed. All essential work to install a central fire alarm system is now complete. All additional fireproof padding of existing steel supports in the building has also been successfully completed to an approved specification. Flats unoccupied since the evacuation of residents in November 2023 were also subject to a legionella testing regime following advice from health and safety officers. Housing officers will advise when all tests have been satisfactorily completed for your individual flat.

Following a review of these reports and the work carried out, Avon Fire & Rescue service advised: *"with these measures now in place, Avon Fire & Rescue Service support the decision to allow residents to reoccupy Barton House, as the risks previously identified have been addressed, in line with the recommendations of the Fire Engineers reports."*

You can access a number of documents on our website: [www.bristol.gov.uk/barton-house](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/barton-house) to help you understand the information available to us at the points of when decisions were made. These documents include:

- Ridge and Partners LLP and Arup's final survey reports provided in February 2024
- Interim findings and recommendations from our contractors
- The findings of Arup's peer-review dated November 2023
- A report from Ridge and Partners LLP from 2022

We have also put together a summary document, which you can access online. We

will provide a copy of the summary report translated into Pashto, Arabic and Somali in the next 24 hours.

By considering these documents together, you will see the information available to us over the past 18 months and the detail that has informed decision making and why we are now confident it is safe for you to return.

**Preparations for your return to your home:** All residents are being contacted by the Housing team to arrange a visit to your flat over the next three days in advance of your moving back in. If you have not heard from the Housing team yet with a time and date for your visit, rest assured you will be contacted shortly. I'd like to thank those of you who have responded so positively to the pre-return visit invitation.

This visit will be a chance for you to understand the work that has been undertaken to make Barton House safe, familiarise yourself with the new fire alarm system and to view your home with a member of the property team and a housing officer to discuss any final repairs and redecorations if needed.

As part of ongoing repair works, trade staff will still be on site when you return. For more complex repairs a surveying team will also be available to carry out inspections to work up plans for future works.

All residents currently staying at the Holiday Inn will need to leave the hotel by 5pm on Friday 23 February.

Housing officers will be on hand at Barton House and the Holiday Inn to provide support and information to help you move safely back into your home.

**Taxis:** Taxis continue to be available to residents to move their belongings back to Barton House. This additional service will end on Sunday 25 February.

**Fire alarm system and testing:** When you return home, you will notice heat sensors throughout the building, in flats and communal areas, which are part of the new alarm system installed.

All residents will hear the fire alarm sound on their pre-return visit. This alarm will sound for a short time at 10am and 2pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week. Please be aware that this is a test and there is no need to leave your flat if you hear the fire alarm at these times.

**Mental health support for you and your family:** If your child needs some support around their mental health and wellbeing, you can access this either through education mental health practitioners (EMHPs) or through the school nurse. Please speak to your school for more information and help on how to access this support for your child.

Three local organisations, the Nilaari Agency, Black Carers Network and the Somali Resource Centre (SRC), representatives will be at the Holiday Inn for three hours each day this week until Friday 23 February. After this date if you need support, please contact these organisations directly using the telephone number below.

- 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

Nilaari Agency: 0117 952 5742 [www.nilaari.co.uk](http://www.nilaari.co.uk)

Somali Resource Centre: 0117 907 7994 [www.somalicentre.org.uk](http://www.somalicentre.org.uk)

**Communications:** Residents' questions, concerns, and feedback can be sent directly to us by emailing [barton.house@bristol.gov.uk](mailto: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

If you have a HomeChoice application and would like advice and support please book an appointment by emailing [barton.house@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:barton.house@bristol.gov.uk), or speak to your Housing Officer.

If you haven't started your HomeChoice application yet, or are struggling to complete an online application, and would like help to apply, please contact the We Are Bristol helpline on **0800 694 0184** so we can arrange support.

We appreciate that this is a stressful time for you and your family, 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.
- **AWP (Avon and Wiltshire mental health partnership):** AWP can offer support, advice and guidance to anyone involved or affected by the evacuation of Barton House. AWP is offering the following advice and guidance. Find out more here: <https://www.awp.nhs.uk/about-us/emergency-preparedness-resilience-and-response/508>
- **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 Thursdays – 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](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/costofliving)