



English

Tenant-Public

The Barcud Monitoring Group (BMG).

Contents.

1. Purpose of this guide.
2. What or who is the Barcud Monitoring Group?
3. How is the BMG different to other Tenant Groups?
4. Why is it called a monitoring group?
5. How does the BMG benefit tenants of Barcud?
6. How does the BMG benefit Barcud?
7. What is the fundamental working ethos of the BMG?
8. What are the BMG's operational procedures?
9. How does the BMG manage its finances?
10. How does the BMG manage recruitment, discipline, and dismissal?
11. What are the core activities of the BMG?
12. What restrictions are on the BMG?
13. What are the Barcud 'Tenant Liaison Forums' and 'Tenants Conference'?
14. What are the Tenant Liaison Panel Strategic and Operational meetings?
15. What are the duties of the BMG's elected officers?

1. Purpose of this guide.

The elected officers of the Barcud Monitoring Group have created this guide to provide an insight and an overview of the Groups operations. This guide may be of interest to new and current tenants of Barcud, other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), external Tenant Groups, and other organisations interested in furthering tenant involvement.

This guide does not contain the Barcud Monitoring Group's *Terms of Reference*, *Code of Conduct*, or *Confidentiality Agreement*. These documents can be provided on request either by contacting Sue Thomas (Senior Tenant Involvement Officer), or Alisa Cakebread (Tenant Involvement Officer) via post@barcud.cymru

2. What or who is the Barcud Monitoring Group?

The Barcud Monitoring Group (BMG) is the tenant group for the tenants of Barcud Cyf. Unlike other tenant Groups in Wales, the BMG is managed, and facilitated by tenants, and has a position for a Barcud leaseholder. The BMG has its own *Terms of Reference*, *Code of Conduct*, and *Confidentiality Agreement*. It also maintains a General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) subscription, and bank account as part of a simple service level and funding agreement with Barcud.

3. How is the BMG different to other Tenant Groups?

First and foremost, the BMG's activities, and internal operations are conducted by its members, and not by members of staff. The Group's members donate their time freely and choose their level of involvement. Barcud recognises the BMG as an independent tenants Group which is written into Barcud's governance document, and thus it is only the tenants and the shareholders of Barcud who can dissolve the Group.

The BMG is recognised as a valued member of the Barcud organisation and is involved in all levels of its operation. The BMG works with the Barcud Group Board, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Directors, the Operational Managers, and other Barcud staff members as required. Barcud, does not direct the BMG's decision-making processes, recommendations, or internal operations.

4. Why is it called a monitoring group?

The Group was first established in January 2010 following the housing stock transfer from Ceredigion County Council to Tai Ceredigion. The Group was initially called the 'Tai Ceredigion Monitoring Group' (TCMG). The Groups' initial purpose was to monitor the implementation of the 174 promises contained within the *Stock Transfer Offer Document*. The tenants involved with the stock transfer steering panel were asked by the initial CEO of Tai Ceredigion to *monitor*, oversee, and assist the new association in its development. As the tenants received, and witnessed the daily services, it was recognised that through their lived experiences, that they were best suited to monitor, co-design, and influence the services tenants received. As part of this work, the tenants also helped to set the company's service standards, and to ensure policies were tenant orientated.

In November 2020, Tai Ceredigion and Mid Wales Housing Association merged and became Barcud Cyf. As part of the merger process, the TCMG, and the Mid Wales Housing Association's 'Tenant & Residents Forum,' jointly agreed to form one tenants group, and to adopt the former TCMG's practices. It was also agreed to be called the 'Barcud Monitoring Group' and to have a new logo which reflected the new operational area.

5. How does the BMG benefit tenants of Barcud?

As stated previously, the Group's members are tenants, and as such they receive the same services as other Barcud tenants; this provides them with the same experiences of the Barcud services and their delivery. It is important to note that the BMG members do not receive preferential treatment from Barcud. The members live in towns and villages throughout Barcud's operational area, and through engagement with their neighbours and friends within their communities they can gain further insight as to Barcud's service delivery.

Diversity. The Group continually endeavours to be reflective of the demographics of Barcud's tenants, including the groups with protected characteristics, as defined within the Equality Act 2010. The members lived experiences, personal and professional backgrounds are an invaluable resource to Barcud and its tenants, as our involvement ensures policies, services, service

delivery and culture are truly tenant focused. In short, the Group ensures the tenants' voice is not simply heard, it also influences all of Barcud's operations.

6. How does the BMG benefit Barcud?

If you are a senior housing professional or a board member of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) you will be familiar with the Welsh Government's *Regulatory Standards* and as such you will be able to clearly recognize from this document how the BMG assists Barcud in meeting these standards.

The BMG's level of involvement throughout Barcud's operations provides Barcud with an informed tenants' perspective at business planning events, reviews, and evaluations of its *Strategic Objectives* and at the *Regulatory Standards*' self-assessment meetings. In the latter meetings the BMG contributes fully on all the regulatory standards and not just those specifically related to tenant involvement.

The BMG provides Barcud, and its Housing Regulator with an additional level of independent verification and oversight. The Housing Regulator engages with the Group directly, and at the Group's invitation has attended meetings of the Group. The Group's working relationship with the association's Housing Regulator was first established in 2010.

In December 2021, the BMG and Barcud received a 'Special Recognition' award from TPAS Cymru for 'Working as one'. Consequently, TPAS Cymru has provided opportunities for the BMG, and the Barcud CEO to share our practices with tenants, and staff from across Wales. The BMG assists Barcud in its aims to be a sector leader in many areas of its operations, and the Group is one of Barcud's primary promotional resources.

7. What is the fundamental working ethos of the BMG?

The BMG's fundamental working practices are but not limited to, co-design, co-production, teamwork, mutual respect, the furtherance of good practice and its promotion with a shared pride, and the furtherance of both the tenant and Barcud interests. The Group cares passionately about Barcud's reputation and highlights its concerns when it deems this could be at risk.

The Group's informed opinion is that Barcud's approach to tenant involvement, and its demonstrable culture to be a tenant focused landlord, is unique within Wales. Barcud recognises it exists to serve its tenants, and that the services it provides need to be influenced and monitored by its tenants. Barcud's culture, and level of tenant involvement has been in practice and further developed since the creation of Tai Ceredigion in November 2009. These practices and principles continue to be one of Barcud's core *Strategic Objectives*. This culture is also a requirement of the Barcud Group Board.

As with other types of communities, tenants possess a diverse wealth of personal, professional, and lived experiences and can be an invaluable asset to any organisation seeking to improve its services. When developing tenant groups, or collaborating with tenants, the approach must be one of mutual respect, encouragement, empowerment, and the provision of training where

requested, and recognition of their personal and combined skillsets. They should also be afforded the freedom to work autonomously. A healthy, and productive environment is one of enablement.

8. What are the BMG's operational procedures?

The BMG's governance documents were initially created by the TCMG in partnership with Open Communities (an external independent organisation in 2010), and the members review these annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose. These documents outline the Group's internal processes and procedures, and all members are required to sign a copy.

The Group holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM), every year at which they elect the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Group meets on the last Friday of each month except for August. These meetings are minuted, and the members provide reports of the activities they have attended either with the association or externally. These minutes are confidential and are not shared with the association. At these meetings, the members can freely discuss their experiences, observations, concerns, and recommendations. The Group's officers take relevant information to Barcud's Leadership, or Operational Management Teams on the alternate second Tuesday of each month.

Except for the Senior Tenant Involvement Officer (STIO), no Barcud staff, or Barcud Group Board members can attend the Group's monthly meetings without the members' consent. The STIO attends as an observer and provides the Group with a list of forthcoming activities and meetings for the members consideration. Unless specifically requested to do so, the STIO does not take any matters back from the Group to the association, or participate in, or influence the Group's discussions and decision-making processes. The STIO respects the Group's autonomy, diversity, confidentiality, and capabilities.

9. How does the BMG manage its finances?

Since the creation of the Group in January 2010 the Group agreed a funding agreement with the association for the sum of but not limited to £10,000 per year. It was agreed that the Group would have its own bank account, which was to be managed by the Group, to keep accurate accounts of its expenditure and to provide the Group's accounts for auditing by the association at the end of each financial year.

The Group created its own Expense Claim form which is in line with HMRC guidelines for travel, and sustenance allowances. The financial agreement was to cover members out of pocket expenses when conducting activities on behalf of the Group and Barcud as well as conferences, and the Group's operational costs. The Treasurer of the Group must ensure the Group has sufficient funding in its accounts to perform its activities and requests funding of up to £2000 from the Director of Housing & Support as required throughout the year. Funding is received in the form of a BACS transfer from the association to the Group's bank account.

The Treasurer provides the members of the Group with a financial report at the Group's monthly meetings, as well as to Barcud's Leadership Team at the Tenant Liaison Panel Strategic meetings, which are held every other month. The Group's *Terms of Reference* contains the necessary criteria for signatories and expense claims.

As part of the funding agreement, it was acknowledged that when members attend an overnight event that most networking opportunities took place in the evening. Consequently, members can claim an additional £20 per night for networking and the promotion of the Group and Barcud. The Group's funding is provided from Barcud's Tenant Involvement budget.

10. How does the BMG manage recruitment, discipline, and dismissal?

The BMG hosts three public events for the wider Barcud tenant community every year. The first two of these events are the 'Barcud Tenant Liaison Forums' (TLF), and the third is the 'Barcud Tenants Conference'. The BMG's Chairperson provides submissions for the Barcud newsletters, and the Barcud Group *Annual Report*. These submissions contain information about the BMG's activities. Information about the Group is also included in the tenancy pack for new tenants, and available on the Barcud website. In July 2023, the BMG started to host quarterly informal online meetings for the tenants of Barcud to hear the wider tenant voice, further highlight the work of the Group, and to seek new members. The need for this additional tenant engagement opportunity was identified and implemented by the BMG's members.

When Barcud receives an expression of interest in the BMG, the tenant's information is given to the Chairperson of the Group who will further engage with the tenant directly. The tenant is extended an invitation to observe one of the Group's monthly meetings. Following their attendance at one or more of the monthly meetings the tenant is given the opportunity to join the Group. The Group does not have a formal recruitment process or specify specific skill requirements as this would be in breach of the Group's *Terms of Reference* which states, "The Monitoring Group believes it must work towards the aims and objectives outlined in the Barcud Tenant Involvement Strategy and Action Plan. It is therefore committed to opposing all forms of discrimination and will actively encourage all members of the community to participate in its activities."

As specified in the Group's governing documents all members must adhere to the Group's *Code of Conduct* and *Confidentiality Agreement*. The officers of the Group manage breaches of these documents in line with the Group's *Terms of Reference*. Barcud cannot and does not get involved with this process, nor can it overturn the Group's decision. Barcud can, however, raise concerns about a member's conduct with the officers of the Group if they believe gross misconduct was evident at a meeting with staff and/or tenants or at a public event.

11. What are the core activities of the BMG?

The BMG's *Terms of Reference* places an onus on the Group to pro-actively seek involvement in Barcud's operations. Barcud automatically seeks involvement with the Group on new and current operations. The list below is continually evolving.

- To continually monitor Barcud's services.
- To continually represent the interests of the tenants of Barcud.
- To inform Barcud of any potential risk to the association arising from its operations or external factors.
- To continually monitor Barcud's public reputation.

The BMG officers attend:

- Barcud's business planning events.
- Barcud's *Regulatory Standards* self-evaluation meeting.
- Barcud's *Strategic Objectives* reviews.
- The 'Tenant Liaison Panel Strategic' meetings with Barcud's Leadership Team.
- The 'Tenant Liaison Panel Operational' meetings with Barcud's Operational Management Team.

The Group:

- Is included in the annual 'Rent setting review and *Rent Setting Policy*' meeting.
- Is included in the annual review of the *Barcud Tenant Involvement Strategy & Action Plan*.
- Is included in Barcud's 'Health & Safety & Wellbeing Forum'.
- Is included in Barcud's 'Damp, Mould & Condensation (DMC) Task Group'.
- Is included in the development of new strategies, policies, and services.
- Is included in reviews of Barcud's specifications and standards.
- Is included in tender submission reviews.
- Is included in the recruitment process of the Barcud Group Chairperson, the CEO, and the Directors.
- Is included in training events for staff members on new operations and approaches.
- Is included in reviews of the Barcud Newsletter.
- Is included in the creation of Barcud's 'STAR Survey' and the monitoring of the associated action plan. Barcud's 'STAR Survey' contains Barcud specific questions in addition to those set by Welsh Government. Every tenant of Barcud receives a printed copy of the survey.
- Reviews all policies to ensure they are tenant friendly and will afford appropriate discretion for vulnerable tenants.
- Conducts estate management inspections to ensure that BMG's service standards are being met.
- Conducts inspections of a random selection of void properties in order to ensure BMG's re-let standards are being met prior to properties being allocated.
- Conducts telephone surveys to independently verify Barcud's tenant satisfaction data.
- Continually monitors and attends review meetings of the Barcud website and social media platforms.
- Sets the agenda and hosts the 'Barcud Tenant Liaison Forums'.
- Sets the agenda, theme, and hosts the annual 'Barcud Tenants Conference'.
- Hosts quarterly informal online meetings for the tenants of Barcud.
- Participates in local and national consultations to represent the tenants' views. We are the only tenant's group in Wales which regularly participates in WELSH GOVERNMENT consultations. Barcud does not influence or participate in the Groups submissions as it recognises the importance of the tenant's views.
- Attends TPAS Cymru training and networking events.
- Attends other Barcud tenant events to meet with tenants and promote the Group. The Group has its own publicity stand.
- Promotes the BMG's operational model to interested tenant groups and RSLs across Wales.
- Promotes Barcud's co-designed good practices.

BMG officers also participate in the Group's activities.

12. What restrictions are on the BMG?

The BMG is not a tenant advocacy Group. It does not get involved with an individual tenants' concerns. The BMG's role is to represent the wider tenant interests. Barcud has processes in place which have been designed in partnership with the BMG to address tenant's concerns. BMG members are also required to approach Barcud directly with matters pertaining to their tenancy. Tenants contacting the BMG with personal concerns are advised of Barcud's procedures, and to contact Barcud directly.

The BMG is not involved with, or influences Barcud's Human Resources department. However, the BMG can, and has participated in the recruitment process of the Barcud Group Chairperson, the CEO, and Directors.

13. What are the Barcud 'Tenant Liaison Forums' and 'Tenants Conference'?

Every year Barcud organises two public 'Tenant Liaison Forum' (TLF) meetings, which are held in fully accessible community venues. These take place in March and June and alternate between Aberystwyth and Newtown. These events provide tenants with an opportunity to meet with the BMG, the CEO, and the Directors, and to receive updates on the work done by the BMG and Barcud.

Staff from housing, maintenance and 'Cynnal' (Barcud's tenancy sustainment team) are present to assist tenants with any matters regarding their tenancy. The BMG chairs this event and creates the agenda of presenters. These can also include presenters from other organisations which could benefit and assist tenants. They are publicised in the Barcud newsletter, on the Barcud Facebook page, on flyers in mailshots and on posters in communal areas.

Tenants are provided with free transport, help with childcare costs, and a buffet lunch. These events are relaxed, friendly, informative, and provide tenants with the opportunity to meet and get to know the members of the Leadership Team in a casual setting. The agenda also includes a 'Question & Answer' session in which the tenants can pose their questions to the CEO and the Directors. This is a popular session for tenants. These events also provide the CEO and the Directors with an insight as to what is happening on the ground.

The 'Tenants Conference' is held in September on the morning of the Barcud Group's AGM, which takes place following lunch. The conference is like the TLF but has a specific theme which is decided by the BMG. Additionally, the BMG's Chairperson presents the BMG's *Annual Report*, and then seeks the tenants' consent for the BMG to represent them for the coming year. Only the tenants are permitted to participate in the voting process.

It is important to note that by holding the conference prior to the Barcud Group's AGM that it enables the Barcud Group's Board members to attend the conference as observers, as well as providing Barcud's tenant shareholders with easier access to the AGM. Every tenant of Barcud is encouraged to become a shareholder, including the members of the BMG.

14. What are the ‘Tenant Liaison Panel’ Strategic and Operational meetings?

The ‘Tenant Liaison Panel’ (TLP) meetings are the primary engagement platform for the BMG with Barcud’s Leadership Team and Operational Management Team. There are two types of the TLP meetings, these being ‘Strategic’ and ‘Operational’. These meetings are held every month and alternate between the two types. Minutes from these meetings are shared with the Barcud Group Board.

These meetings provide the BMG with the opportunity to present its observations and recommendations to the relevant team and for those teams to provide updates to the BMG, which the officers of the Group provide to its members at the Group’s monthly meetings.

The TLP ‘Strategic’ meeting is attended by the CEO, the directors, the Assistant Director for Customer Services & Partnerships, the Senior Governance Officer, and the Senior Tenant Involvement Officer. Standard agenda items include: Housing & Support updates (including the Care Society), Assets & Development updates, updates on the subsidiaries (EOM, Care & Repair Powys, and Medra), Governance updates, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Tenant Involvement updates. Other Strategic matters are included as and when they arise and require BMG’s involvement.

The TLP ‘Operational’ meetings are attended by the Assistant Director for Customer Services & Partnerships, the Heads of Responsive Repairs & Void Maintenance (East & West), the Head of Planned Maintenance & Compliancy, the Heads of Housing & Support Services (East & West), the Senior Developments Officer and the Senior Tenant Involvement Officer. Standard agenda items include Planned Works updates, Housing & Support updates, Maintenance updates, updates on New Developments, Customer Services updates, and Tenant Involvement updates.

At both types of the TLP meetings the BMG’s officers provide an update on the Group’s activities, observations and recommendations, its monitoring of the progress of actions raised previously and participates fully in discussions and the decision-making process. Although these meetings have a formal structure, all the attendees adopt an informal approach, which strengthens working relationships and furthers the Barcud culture towards its tenants.

15. What are the duties of the BMG’s elected officers?

Chairperson

- To ensure every member can be fully involved in the Group’s discussions and activities.
- To encourage and support a diverse membership.
- To empower and support new and current members.
- To ensure and maintain the Group’s cohesion.
- To assist in the recruitment of new members through direct engagement with interested tenants.
- To remember that decisions and actions are at the direction of the Group’s members and not that of the Chairperson. The Group must remain member led and follow the democratic process when considering a proposal or action.
- To set the agenda and Chair the Group’s monthly meetings.
- To attend briefing meetings with the Group’s officers e.g., prior to a TLP meeting to discuss information provided for said meeting.

- To address any breaches of the Group's *Code of Conduct* and *Confidentiality Agreement* in line with the Group's *Terms of Reference*.
- To be aware of the obligations of the Group as defined within the current *Barcud Tenant Involvement Strategy & Action plan* and to ensure both the Group and Barcud, are meeting these obligations.
- To ensure no actions are taken which may diminish the Group's independent status.
- To make an 'Executive Decision' on behalf of the Group where necessary.
- To maintain the Group's annual GDPR subscription and to operate in accordance with the regulations.
- To Chair public tenant events such as the 'Barcud Tenants Conference' and 'Barcud Tenant Liaison Forum'.
- To compose the Group's *Annual Report* prior to its AGM and the 'Barcud Tenants Conference'.
- To provide articles on the recent activities of the Group for Barcud's newsletter, staff e-Bulletin and *Annual Report*.
- To attend consultation events where our tenants would benefit from representation and support.
- To develop and maintain a positive working relationship with the Barcud staff.
- To present the Group's concerns, recommendations, observations, and views at the TLP 'Strategic' and 'Operational' meetings and to report back to the Group.
- To attend Barcud's business planning events, *Strategic Objectives* reviews, and *Regulatory Standards* self-assessment meetings to present the tenants' views and to report back to the Group.
- To agree press releases with Barcud where required.
- To promote the Group and Barcud both locally and nationally.

Vice-Chairperson

- To attend all meetings with the Chairperson.
- To attend all meetings with the Group's officers.
- To support, advise and challenge the Chairperson where necessary.
- To conduct the Chairpersons activities where the Chairperson is unavailable.
- To ensure they have all information provided to the Chairperson to carry out the Chairpersons duties where necessary.

Secretary

- To attend all meetings with the Group's officers.
- To assist the Chairperson with the setting of the Agenda for the Group's monthly meetings.
- To take minutes of the Groups monthly meetings.
- To circulate the agenda, minutes, and reports to all members at least one week prior to the Group's monthly meetings.
- To circulate any additional information to the Group's members where necessary.
- To circulate the *Forward Diary* of events and dates prior to the Groups monthly meetings.
- To take notes at the TLP meetings.

Treasurer

- To attend all meetings with the Group's officers.
- To maintain accurate accounts of the Group's income and expenditure.
- To manage the Group's bank account and signatories.
- To provide a monthly financial report to the members at the Group's monthly meetings.
- To attend the TLP 'Strategic' meetings to provide Barcud's Leadership Team with the Group's monthly and year to date expenditure.
- To submit the Group's annual accounts to Barcud for auditing at the end of the financial year.
- To ensure receipts and invoices are submitted with the Group's annual accounts to Barcud.
- To provide the Group with an *Annual Financial Report* at the Group's AGM.
- To request further funds from Barcud when deemed necessary and only where the Group has given consent.
- To ensure members are reimbursed for reasonable and approved out of pocket expenses.
- To ensure claim forms are completed accurately with accompanying receipts and invoices where necessary.