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BUILD TO RENT

www.instyledirect.com

*The resident retention
blueprint for Build to Rent*



“In Build to Rent, residents don’t just renew a lease – they renew a lifestyle.”



At the heart of a BTR scheme are its residents. The success of a BTR operation hinges on its experience impacting occupancy and financial performance at large while also helping build a strong community. Low retention is a setback in the industry, even though it has its benefits. Every lease that isn't renewed costs operators marketing fees, downtime, lost profits, and repair costs. Putting residents' needs first is the best way to improve business performance.

This guide demonstrates how strategic investment and practical solutions, including professional furnishing, regular replenishment cycles, and strategic refurbishment, amplify tenant experience from their first viewing to move-in experience and ongoing maintenance and drive profitability in BTR schemes.

INTRODUCTION

“A focus on customer service is a defining feature of BTR and underpins its emphasis on resident satisfaction and long-term occupancy.” British Property Federation

BTR is a customer-focused industry with high competition, so resident experiences directly determine the financial, operational, and reputational performance of a scheme.



WHY

resident experience matters

1

Retention is profit protection

Tenant turnover costs more than lost rent. Factors including marketing, void weeks, and refurbishment work all add up. In a competitive market, operators who keep residents happy enjoy higher retention, fewer voids, and stronger returns. 55% of multi-family households (MFH) and 59% of single-family households (SFH) renewed their lease last in 2024 that directly correlates to tenant satisfaction and lowering void periods, as per BPF, BTR Report 2025.

2

Experience is loyalty

BTR Report suggests rents at older schemes typically grow faster (within three years), closing the gap with new developments by about 20%, a pattern seen across schemes with similar starting points as well as those targeting different market segments, thanks to established resident bases, stable demand, and high-performing amenities.

INTRODUCTION



WHY resident experience matters

3

The ratings speak for themselves

The ratings speak for themselves: Knight Frank findings show schemes achieving top Resident Experience scores (70+) deliver stronger renewal performance, while HomeViews shows BTR satisfaction hitting a record 4.53/5 in 2024. Every report demonstrates that a better experience directly leads to more people staying.

4

Service quality is paramount

Across all BTR studies, service quality remains the strongest performance predictor, with highly rated management teams consistently outperforming in terms of satisfaction, renewal rates, and rental outcomes.



Market overview & resident profile

The BTR sector continues its rapid expansion, with over 132,296+ completed units across the UK, as per the British Property Federation's Q2 2025 report, representing a doubling of units in just four years. Regional cities are now overtaking London in delivery, with Birmingham boasting the largest regional pipeline at over 16,000 units either under construction or in planning.

Who lives in BTR?

To make retention strategies effective, understanding its core demographic is essential. 2025 BPF and ARL research shows the BTR population comprises:



34% singles: Typically young professionals seeking convenience and well-managed living

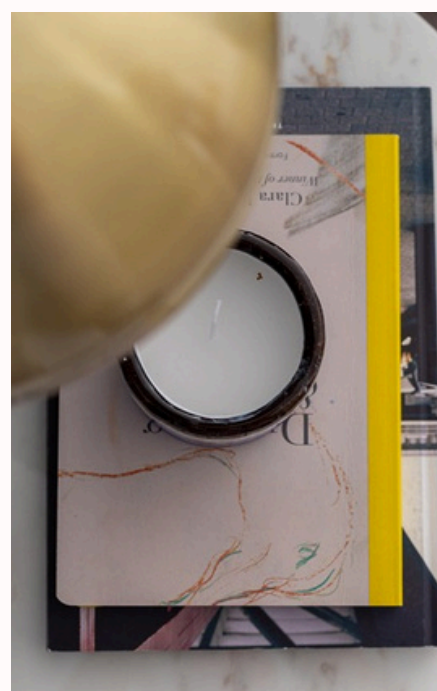


60% couples and sharers:
The core BTR audience, attracted by amenities, service and stability



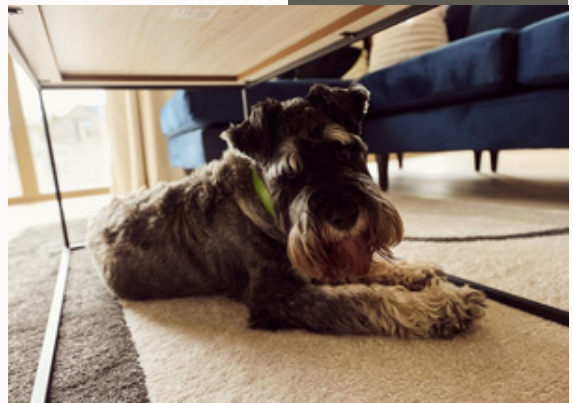
6% families: A modest amount in MFH, but a growing number in SFH BTR, where they represent 38%

Source: British Property Foundation: Who Lives in BTR



What do residents expect?

Convenience, design quality, responsive service, and fair value are some clear priorities residents expect. They're often willing to pay premiums for genuinely superior experiences but equally quick to move if expectations aren't met. The rise in remote and hybrid working also elevated the importance of in-home working environments and reliable connectivity.



Speed and readiness matter

Residents are not just expecting a place to live, but they are seeking ease, comfort & the at-home feeling from the moment they walk in. Operators who deliver quick, seamless setups with strategic furnishing delivered swiftly see strong results.

At InStyle Direct, we turn empty units into homes residents connect with instantly at scale. Our work at Sugar House Island reflects that: 500+ fully furnished homes, 100% immediate rentals, a 20% uplift in value, and a waitlist created. When spaces are styled, finished and move-in ready without delay, decisions become easier, lease-up accelerates, and developments outperform expectations, because in a market built on convenience and first impressions, readiness is the advantage over competition.



What drives resident satisfaction



UNDERSTANDING THE KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING RESIDENT SATISFACTION ALLOWS OPERATORS TO FOCUS RESOURCES WHERE THEY'LL HAVE HIGH IMPACT.

Amenities create differentiation

High-performing BTR schemes average 7 resident amenities compared to just 2 in lower-performing developments. However, quantity alone doesn't guarantee satisfaction, quality furnishings, accessibility, and maintenance of facilities matter equally. Communal areas like the gym remain valuable amenities, with wellbeing centres and green spaces being the most valued amenities, mentioned positively in 53% of reviews for top-rated facilities.

Apartment quality is foundational

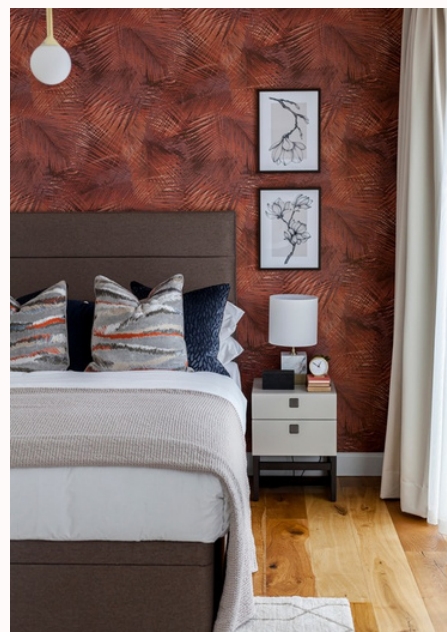
Larger units, high-quality finishes, thoughtful use of space, and energy efficiency all drive satisfaction scores. Positive reviews from residents always mention natural light, modern design, and functional layouts. Residents really like well-thought-out storage, well-functioning appliances, and attention to soundproofing and acoustics.



What drives resident satisfaction

Community creates connection

Satisfaction comes from things like engagement initiatives, events for residents, and making people feel like they belong. But authenticity is important—people in the community can quickly tell the difference between tokenistic efforts and real community building.



Location is essential

Good transport links, nearby shops and dining, and access to green space all influence where people choose to live. In 2024, five of the ten highest-rated BTR communities for location were in Greater Manchester, showing how strong connectivity and local amenities boost resident satisfaction in regional cities.

Service and management separate leaders from followers

Research consistently identifies speed and professionalism in handling maintenance requests as critical factors in renewal decisions. The highest-rated communities for management score 5.0 out of 5, with residents regularly praising "personal", "friendly", and "efficient" teams who demonstrate genuine care for resident concerns.*

*Homeviews Rightmove Build to Rent Report extracted from 'key findings'.

The condition factor

Quality interiors and durable furnishings ensure apartments remain attractive throughout tenancies. Regular restocking services keep furniture looking fresh, which helps maintain satisfaction scores, as worn-out furniture is often mentioned as a reason for not renewing leases in lower-rated properties.



Void periods drain profit. Operators pay for service, upkeep, and maintenance out of their profits, and they often spend more on advertising to fill empty homes. Centrick's study shows that even a short void can have a big effect on annual returns.

Operational challenges:

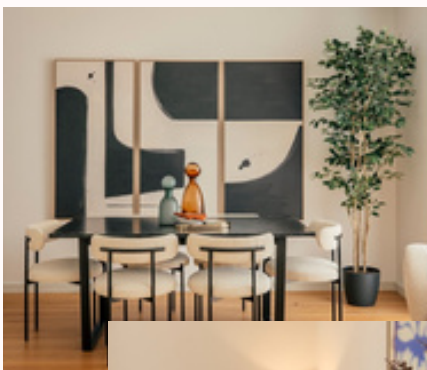
Operators have to strike a tricky balance: launching with outstanding amenities and then keeping them in top shape year after year. Many lower-rated communities suffer as their facilities initially appear amazing but quickly become worn out or overcrowded.



THE COST OF CHURN & RETENTION CHALLENGES

Top reasons for residents leaving:

- Rent increases: Especially when the service doesn't match improvements
- Worn interiors: Dated aesthetics or furniture degradation or unmaintained interiors
- Slow service responses: When maintenance or repair queries are unresponsive or slow, it impacts tenant experience.
- Lack of community initiatives: Schemes without active community engagement leave tenants dissatisfied, hence higher churn rate



Strategies to improve resident experience leading to higher rate of retention



Strategy	Market insight	How we can help	Outcome
Move-in ready units	Faster leasing velocity with furnished, styled spaces (BPF 2025)	Turnkey furnishing packages installed in 24–48 hrs	Quicker occupancy, lower voids
Sustained satisfaction	Apartment quality & finishes directly impact renewal (Knight Frank 2023)	Refurbishment & renovation services	Higher renewals, stronger NOI
Minimise wear & tear impact	“Tired stock” is a leading reason for non-renewal	Furniture replenishment service (swap/replace items mid-cycle)	Apartments stay fresh, reducing churn
Sustainability focus	Energy-efficient units achieve higher satisfaction	Renovations with efficient fittings & finishes	Lower bills, appeal to eco-conscious renters
Operational responsiveness	1 in 3 schemes fail on speed of enquiry response (Source: Yardi)	Professional installation & aftercare	Better resident perception of service speed

Metrics & KPIs to track

Effective retention strategies require measurement. Operators should monitor these performance indicators to track tenant retention trends.

Renewal rate percentage

This is the strongest indicator of retention & stability. 55% of MFH residents renewed, rising to 59% in SFH, representing a propensity to stay longer even with fixed-term tenancies, as per the BPF July 2025 report.

Average void period

Occupancy and reduced void days are core to financial stability in BTR. Minimising time in the market ensures consistent income and supports smoother operations, making it a critical metric for long-term performance.

Resident Net Promoter Score (NPS)

HomeViews data suggests Resident ratings for All BTR homes reached a new record in 2024, with an Overall rating of 4.53 out of 5, making NPS an important metric to predict renewals and rental premiums.

Amenity usage rates

Residents in the highest-rated buildings frequently praise the ease of booking and accessibility of facilities, highlighting the importance of how facilities are run, as well as the quality of the amenities themselves. 53% of top facilities' reviews mention the gym positively. (HomeViews BTR 2025 report)



Metrics & KPIs to track

Effective retention strategies require measurement. Operators should monitor these performance indicators to track tenant retention trends.

Maintenance response times

Top-rated BTR communities stand out for “personal”, “friendly” and “efficient” service that makes residents feel genuinely cared for, the same report suggests. Tracking metrics such as maintenance turnaround times, first-time fix rates and complaint resolution ensures service remains consistently high.

Furniture condition assessments

Asset condition directly aligns with tenant satisfaction, dated furniture, unclean facilities, and poorly maintained communal assets receive frequent complaints. Keeping logs of furniture age and condition, along with scheduling refurbishments and refreshing finishes, helps maintain the scheme's freshness over time.

Energy costs

Tracking energy use at a per-sqm level helps operators control running costs and maintain comfort for residents. Efficient buildings not only support sustainability goals but also strengthen value perception, ensuring homes remain affordable to live in as well as to rent. Homeviews suggests that “modern interiors and good-quality appliances gain frequent mentions in reviews, along with the energy efficiency of the homes and the cost savings generated.”



Metrics & KPIs to track

Effective retention strategies require measurement. Operators should monitor these performance indicators to track tenant retention trends.

Satisfaction scores by category

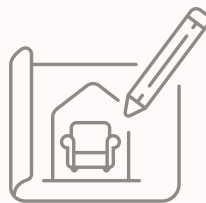
HomeViews* recent ratings provide a benchmark for resident experience KPIs across BTR, with Overall satisfaction at 4.53, supported by consistently strong category scores for:



Location
4.59/5



Facilities
4.48/5



Design
4.48/5



Value
4.30/5



Management
4.35/5

**HomeViews Rightmove BTR report, 2025*

Tracking when furnishings or finishes are due for replenishment or improvement helps operators prevent dissatisfaction before it impacts renewal decisions. Top operators use tenant feedback metrics to spot problems early, that's why they're able to deliver excellence.



Implementation roadmap

BTR operators benefit from a practical, phased-out action plan to improve resident retention through interior improvements and service enhancements.

PHASE 3

Long term

Integrate energy-efficient improvements into future renovation cycles to support affordability and comfort.

Create consistent furnishing and maintenance standards across the portfolio to keep quality reliable as buildings mature, reflecting what sets top-rated communities apart.

PHASE 2

Medium term

Plan refurbishments for homes that look tired or outdated. Residents in higher-rated communities often praise the comfort and quality of interiors, showing how much these upgrades matter.

Arrange furniture packs for empty units to help them rent out faster and help renters picture themselves living there.

PHASE 1

Quick Wins

Audit the current condition of interiors and gather resident feedback to spot small issues early. Frustrations in lower-rated buildings often link to dated or poorly maintained spaces.

Implement a replenishment cycle for worn items to keep homes feeling cared for. With more than half of residents renewing in multi-family BTR, small improvements can help maintain satisfaction, as per the BPF 2025 report.

Future BTR trends

As the BTR sector continues to evolve, several trends are shaping retention strategies:

Flexible furnishing

Forward-thinking operators are exploring flexible furnishing packages and greater customisation to address the desire for space personalisation and ownership among renters without commitment.

Tech-driven services

Resident apps for furniture requests, repairs and lease renewals are becoming expected rather than novel. Smart home features and seamless connectivity are increasingly important, with 93% of renters wanting WiFi within days of moving in, as per the HomeViews BTR Report.

Hybrid living

Co-working spaces and adaptable interiors reflect ongoing remote and hybrid working patterns, creating sustained demand.

Well-being focus

To support a high-quality life, gyms, green spaces, and fun community spaces with mental and physical health amenities are becoming increasingly significant.

Sustainability focus

Sustainability is moving from a value-add to an expectation. Higher-performing BTR schemes already demonstrate stronger energy performance, with Band A buildings showing lower running costs at £5.29 per sqm compared with £11.52 in Band E, as per BTR experience report 2024.

Compact yet efficient units

Rising demand for more compact, well-designed homes that use space intelligently, supporting affordability while maintaining comfort and everyday flexibility.

Some key takeaways : Tenant retention is the answer to improving and protecting the revenue of BTR schemes, and the resident experience is the most effective lever to influence it. Operators who act with insight and keep interiors fresh, functional, and well-maintained are more likely to secure tenant renewals.



Aligning services to operator needs

Operators need fast leasing, consistent satisfaction, cost control, and asset longevity to make a scheme successful. Our flexible approach allows for close collaboration with operators, ensuring every unit and facility in the scheme upholds excellence.



Furnishing packages

Affordable and customisable furniture packages crafted with a people-first design philosophy that help accelerate occupancy by creating move-in-ready homes.



Refurbishment programmes

From light repairs to major upgrades, we refresh ageing stock, extending its competitive life and maintaining rental values without full redevelopment costs.



Replenishment services

Our aftercare service helps operators maintain consistent standards across high-turnover tenancies and large portfolios.



Renovation services

We help reposition assets for modern renter expectations, incorporating energy efficiency, updated aesthetics, and contemporary amenities.



Our track record



NEW FOUNTAINBRIDGE, EDINBURGH

EH3 9PE

Developer	Vastint	
Installation time	5 weeks for 1 st phase	First half of the 253 modern, move-in-ready BTR homes delivered
Number of units furnished	123 of 253 (show homes, 1,2,3,4 bed/ townhouse)	sparkling
Number of phases	2	immediate rental demand
Completion info	Phase 1 completed on schedule, phase 2 set to commence	

Our track record



SUGAR HOUSE ISLAND

E15 2RB

Developer	Vastint
Installation time	10 weeks per phase
Number of units furnished	450 (show homes, 1,2,3 bedroom)
Number of phases	2
Completion info	Completed ahead of schedule

100%
rented within 1 month

Our track record



BRUNEL STREET WORKS

E16 1EA

Developer	Carter Jonas
Installation time	5 weeks for all units
Number of units furnished	79 (show homes, 1,2,3 bedroom)
Number of phases	1
Completion info	2 weeks ahead of schedule

75%
rented within 1 month

Our track record



CASPAR APARTMENTS

B3 1PW

Developer

Private Client

Installation
time

1 week

Number of
units
furnished

20 (1,2,3
bedroom)

Number of
phases

1

Completion
info

3 weeks ahead
of schedule

0

recalls, repairs
or replacements
till date

Our track record



PEGASO

N6 5JW

Developer

Private Client

Installation
time

2 months for all units
(staggered upon request)

Number of
units
furnished

37 (1,2,3
bedroom)

Number of
phases

1

Completion
info

4 weeks ahead
of schedule

70%

rented within 5 weeks
at full asking price

Our track record



ST JAMES'S SQUARE

SW1Y 6HD

Developer	Ocubis
Installation time	5 days for all units
Number of units furnished	13 (1,2,3 bedroom)
Number of phases	1
Completion info	Completed on schedule

0

recalls, repairs or replacements till date

Leading with sustainability

0

Landfill
policy



2 tonnes of CO2
emissions are
reduced
by recycling



On our journey to
become
carbon neutral



261 trees saved
by recycling



17.7 tonnes of material
(cardboard and paper)
recycled



406,775 litres of
water saved



33% less emissions
by using a 93%
Euro-compliant,
hybrid or electric
fleet



Contact Information

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Explore how we help BTR operators with professional furnishing, replenishment, and refurbishment solutions that can align with your BTR resident expectations and retention objectives.

Reach out to our team and discuss your specific requirements and discover how we can support your retention strategy

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